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The Branded Brave. 151



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THE BRANDED BRAVE;

OR,

THE TRAIL OF DEATH.

BY PAUL BIBBS.

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING POCKET NOVELS:

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THE BRANDED BRAVE;

OR,

THE TRAIL OF DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

A DISAPPOINTED ASSEMBLAGE.

THE village of Montville was situated on the right bank of the Minnesota, some eighty or ninety miles below Big Stone Lake, the river's source.

On a pleasant morning in May, years ago, a number of individuals were gathered before a large sized, and not inelegant looking log-cabin, that stood in the center of a piece of open ground, about two miles from the outskirts of Montville, and was the property of Jasper Arfort.

Arfort was the wealthiest, of *not* the most respected man to be found in those parts, being possessed of a large tract of land, numerous horses, and a fine herd of cattle. Besides this, rumor said, he kept in some place known to himself only, a bag of gold; but this rumor, like several others said of him, had not the slightest foundation in fact.

It was, as yet, quite early, and the owner of the ground upon which the crowd was assembled had not yet made his appearance. Most of those assembled were villagers, with a fair sprinkling of hunters and trappers.

"Wagh!" said one of these latter, his patience beginning to tire, by the non-appearance of Arfort. "It's high time the show was over. Seems to me that the boss is a-takin' it kinder easy like, considering—"

The complaint was interrupted by Arfort's appearance from within the cabin. He was a man past forty years of age, tall, but not the possessor of any great amount of strength, either physical or mental. His hair was gray, and short, and

his eyes were of a bright blue hue. Unlike those who greeted his appearance, he did not wear the common garb of the frontier, but one cut in the latest "Broadway" style. On one of his fingers flashed a valuable diamond ring, his feet were incased in calf-skin boots, and on his head a black felt hat. With Jasper Arfort, dress was a passion, and always had been. It mattered not to him whether he was in a fashionable thoroughfare in St. Louis or New Orleans, or whether he was in the forest, his apparel was neat and scrupulously clean. So, too, was the interior of his cabin, as a glance inside would have proved.

A storm of "Good-mornings" greeted his coming, and with an unconcealed smile of vanity, flattered, he walked briskly toward the assemblage.

"Well," he said, as he neared them, "you have come to be witnesses of the punishment I invariably inflict upon all red-skin intruders, eh? Gad! You won't be disappointed. But where's Rollo? Why isn't he here, I should like to know?" concluded the owner, in an angry tone. Then, raising his voice to its highest pitch, he called for Rollo—the man-of-all-work for the settler.

Rollo quickly put in an appearance. He was a long, lank specimen of the New-Englander, brimful of wit and good-humor. He was habited in a very old and torn suit of buckskin, and his complexion, by exposure and the excessive use of "fine cut," was of a nut-brown. A pair of small and twinkling orbs, hair worn long, and surmounted by a hat not unlike those worn by the Knights of the sawdust ring, completes his description.

"Where is the prisoner—the red-skin?" demanded Arfort, hastily.

"Safe and sound, I reckon. Want him?"

"Yes. Bring him here, at once."

The Yankee quitted the spot, wending his way to a small-sized log hut, some hundreds of yards distant.

This was flat-roofed, with no windows, the only ingress being a low and very narrow doorway, against which lay a heavy oaken log. This Rollo pulled aside, and by dint of a no small amount of exertion, he forced himself inside the hut.

In one corner of this miserable hut, upon a pile of straw, lay a human figure—an Indian. His head was resting upon his arm, his eyes being turned wistfully toward Rollo. He was a young man, not over twenty-four years of age, tall, and extremely muscular. His features were finely molded, and belonged rather to the Caucasian, than to the American race. His hair, too, although black as the plume of a raven, wanted the straightness and coarseness characteristic of the savage. It was not long, and was fine and inclined to curl in clusters upon his shoulders.

A glance at the young Indian would have shown him to be a prisoner. His wrists, and ankles, too, were bound together by buck-skin thongs. These Rollo at once untied.

"Come; you're wanted," said the Yankee, in a voice not unkind. "I'm deucedly sorry for you, but I warned yew several times to keep clear o' the governor's grounds.

Passing to the outside of the hut, the man was followed by his prisoner, who offered not the slightest resistance, but there was a gleam of passion in his eyes which showed how deeply felt was the situation in which he was placed. As he was being led forward, his eyes were fastened upon the crowd which was so anxiously awaiting his arrival, but not a word or ejaculation of surprise escaped his tightly drawn lips.

From the demeanor of the Indian, it was evident that he knew the fate, or punishment, to be expected. He had been taken prisoner on the premises of Jasper Arfort, and he had, more than once, seen his red brethren undergo punishment for a like offense. The young Indian, despite his outward indifference, was not without a feeling of dread at what he supposed to be awaiting him.

"Well," Arfort demanded of the Indian, at the same time confronting him, "what have you to say for yourself, eh? You know well enough the hatred I have for you red-skins, and my reasons for wishing you to keep clear of my land. Only the other night some of your tribe eluded the vigilance of my scouts, and the consequence was, I lost several sheep, and one or two cows. You are nothing more than a pack of dirty thieves!"

"Kegonsa is no thief. His skin is red, but his heart is honest."

"He! he! he!" laughed several of the trappers, Arfort joining them. "Who ever heerd tell o' an honest red-skin?"

"Not I, for one."

"No," said another, addressing Arfort. "Well put, governor. Your opinion is worth comin' ten miles to hear."

This piece of flattery was not without its effect upon the settler, and without further parley, he ordered the savage to be tied to a tree.

Then, indeed, did a sense of the indignity which was about to be put upon him arouse him, and with a quick spring, he attempted to regain his liberty. It was a rash attempt. Even had he got clear of the crowd, the bullets of many there would have been but too sure, and sooner or later, his course would have been stopped, and perhaps forever. But he did not even get away. If he was quick, there were others equally on the alert: and in less time than it takes to tell it, he was again a captive.

He was dragged to a tree not far distant, and quickly fastened to it in such a position that it would be easy for the chastiser to deliver the blows fairly and squarely upon the victim's back.

During this scene, Rollo had wended his way to the cabin, from which he now returned, holding in his hand a long, raw-hide whip.

"Ha! ha!" laughed one of the lookers-on, taking the cruel instrument in his hand, "as thick and well-twisted a lash as I ever set my eyes on."

"Yes," said Arfort, "it's one I had made expressly by old Joe, the teamster; and a nice little pile it cost me, too."

"Well," said another, "I'll pronounce my judgment on it after its merits have been tested."

All but one thing was now in readiness. The prisoner was secured, the whip was on hand, and the crowd eager for the scene, for which they had assembled, to be enacted.

"Who's to do the slashing?" was asked.

"Here's Jim Ashby," was the response. "He'll do, I reckon, for if any man knows how to handle a whip, it is him."

"Yes; come, Jim," said Mr. Arfort. "Won't you oblige me?"

After stepping forward a few paces, and then halting a few seconds, in order to take a fresh mouthful of tobacco, Jim Ashby, a long, raw-boned teamster, from the Wisconsin lumber regions, took the whip in his hand.

The crisis had come.

The prisoner was as steady as the tree to which he was bound, the crowd eager, and so still was it, that a pin could have been heard to drop, as the cruel whip was raised. But just at this instant, a light figure bounded into the crowd, and stationed itself in close proximity to the captive savage. It was a girl, young and strikingly beautiful. Her large, dark eyes flashed with mingled pity and indignation, and her jet-black hair, falling in masses upon her shoulders and down her back, gave her the appearance of some Gipsy queen.

It was Maud, Mr. Arfort's only child.

"Maud," said her father, in a stern voice, "what do you mean by this?"

Hard-hearted as Jasper Arfort was, it was seldom that he spoke harshly to his child. When, therefore, his stern words were spoken, the flashing eye, the angry look, disappeared in an instant, and in a voice almost of supplication, she said:

"Father, do not punish Kegonsa. He does not deserve it."

"Maud, leave that to me. Return immediately to the house."

"But, father, consider—"

"I will consider nothing. He is guilty of trespassing on grounds where he has no right to be, and must be treated accordingly."

Seeing that further parley with her angry father would only be useless, and intimidated by the coarse crowd around her, the young girl turned upon her heel, and left the spot.

"Now, then, Ashby, let us proceed," said Arfort.

The teamster again raised the whip.

But at this instant came another interruption.

This, too, was caused by a female, but one differing very widely in appearance from Maud Arfort. She was an In-

dian, old and wrinkled, her once black hair being changed to a lighter hue.

Her appearance was no less sudden than unexpected; and her black orbs fixed upon Arfort, she advanced so close that it needed but the stretching forth of a hand to have touched him.

"Pale-face," she said, "beware what you do!"

"Beware! You old brazen-faced hag! How dare you speak thus to me?" was Arfort's passionate answer.

The squaw said nothing aloud, but, leaning forward, whispered something in Arfort's ear.

On the instant, the bystanders observed him turn pale. Then, turning to Rollo, he ordered him to release the captive. Hearing this, the crowd began to move away; but, as they did so, more than one expression of anger and disappointment reached Jasper Arfort's ears.

But he heeded them not, for his thoughts were too busily occupied elsewhere.

CHAPTER II.

JASPER ARFORT MAKES A BARGAIN.

THAT afternoon, an hour before sundown, a young man neared the grounds belonging to Jasper Arfort. From his mien, and the manner in which his eye rested on everything, it was evident that he was a stranger. He was not over three-and-twenty, and was habited in a neat suit of cloth, a narrow-rimmed felt hat; and, too, he sported a small amount of jewelry, though not enough to give him a "flashy" appearance. He was not unarmed. Across his shoulders was strung a light and finely-finished rifle, and in his belt was a brace of small Colt's, and a glistening bowie.

Suddenly the young man came upon the fence which served to mark the boundaries of Arfort's possessions. A look of surprise shot across his features, for the structure was evidently an unexpected sight. Approaching close to the

fence, he laid his hand upon the upper rail with the design of leaping to the other side, when a voice arrested his attention.

"Halloo! stranger. Better stay whar yew air, I guess."

The eyes of the stranger fell upon the long, gaunt form of Rollo, who stood leaning on the fence, a few yards away, and as he scanned the Yankee, a smile stole over his face.

"Better stay where I am, eh?" he said, good-humoredly. "Is no one ever allowed to cross this fence, then?"

"Wal," answered Rollo, inserting a fresh quantity of tobacco into his mouth, "the fact is, stranger, the boss is very particular about red-skins, or whites as he doesn't happen to know, a-comin' into his woods. I don't blame him, altogether, either."

"All right, friend," cheerfully returned the young fellow. "I am glad you told me, for it goes against me to offend any one."

"Yaas. Sartin. What may be your handle?"

"My name is Amboy."

"Want tew know! From the East, bean't yew?"

"Yes."

"New Yorker, p'rhaps?"

"Right, again."

"Yaas. Long out here?"

"No."

"What's your religion? Jew, Christian, Mahommedan—or, p'rhaps, you air like me: one who trusts in the Lord, an' ain't ashamed to smoke a pipe with a poor man?"

The young man gave vent to a light laugh, as he answered:

"Well, friend, you and I do not differ much on *that* score, I can promise you."

"Yaas. I thoit so, by your cut. But what might have fetched you out here—land-speculatin'?"

"No."

"You air a doctor, p'rhaps?"

"Right, again."

"Come out here to dose us with physic, if we happen to git down with fever, and so on, eh?"

"Partly," answered the young man, amused rather than dis-

pleased at the questioning he was being subjected to. "The fact is, my friend," he continued, "I am traveling for my health, and on my return to the East, I intend writing a book descriptive of my journey."

"Ha! A writer, eh?"

"A very unworthy one, I am afraid."

"Yaas—jes3 so. Wal, stranger, if you air on the look-out for a job in that line, I can fetch you to jest the place, I reckon."

"Indeed I" exclaimed the other, hardly understanding the import of the words.

"Yaas. The fact is, my boss has been on the look out for a chap like you, for some time. He has got a heap of writin' of some kind or another to do, and if you ain't above tackling the job, he'll pay you well for it, I'll bet."

The words of Rollo were not without their effect upon the young man, for the smile which had been playing upon his features disappeared, and he said in a serious tone:

"Where does your boss, as you call him, live?"

"Not far from here. Jess through the grove."

The young man stood for a few moments in silence. But he was not idle; and the conclusion he arrived at during that interval was the means of putting a different aspect upon his fortunes.

"Well," he said at length, "take me to your master, and if I like him, we may be able to come to terms."

"Jess so, squire. Over with ye an' come along," and Rollo started for the clearing. Springing over the fence, Amboy followed him.

The first impression of the cabin upon the young man was a favorable one; and he did not fail to perceive that the habitant of it, whoever he was, was no common frontiersman. The site chosen for the habitation, the care exercised in its erection, the well-kept grounds, adorned with evergreens and flower-beds, bore evidence that the owner was a man of both taste and means.

Following the guide inside, the young man was ushered into a neatly-furnished apartment, through which was streaming the light of the setting sun. Motioning him to a seat, Rollo quitted the apartment.

A few moments elapsed, and then the owner of the cabin entered. The young man rose to his feet, and the two confronted each other. A few seconds elapsed ere either spoke. Each was endeavoring to measure the other.

"Whom have I the pleasure of meeting?" demanded the settler.

"My name is Henry Amboy," answered the young man.

"Mine is Jasper Arfort. You are heartily welcome, sir, for we see so very little of strangers in these desperate regions, that when one does happen to come along, it is a treat. But pardon me—I am keeping you standing. Allow me to offer you a cigar."

"Thank you, I don't use tobacco."

"Not? I do. In fact, it is my only comfort, and I therefore indulge in it freely."

For upward of an hour did the two remain there, until the darkness warranted the introduction of lights. But at the end of that time, the young man found himself engaged to Arfort, and for what purpose shall be revealed further on. In the mean time, Amboy was to make the cabin his home, a thing which, on his introduction to the handsome Maud, he had no occasion to regret.

CHAPTER III.

A WORTHY PAIR.

A FEW evenings later than the events related in the last chapter transpired, shortly after the hour of sunset, a canoe shot suddenly out from the right bank of the St. Peter's, a mile or more above the settlement of Montville.

The craft, headed for a certain point on the opposite bank, was propelled by a single person—an Ojibwah of herculean proportions and hideous aspect. His dress of buck-skin and tannet, dirty and torn as it was, would alone have sufficed to have given him an uninviting appearance; but it was not this that inspired all who beheld him with disgust and dread.

It was his face. The savage had once fallen a victim to small-pox, and the dread disease had left its ravages upon his naturally savage features in a terrible manner. Nor was this all. Half-concealed by his matted hair, was a mark—a mark left by the impress of a red-hot iron.

The savage—Waubesah by name—was a marked man, and the history of that brand a frightful one. A few years earlier than the date of our story, he had been brought before a backwoods jury on several occasions, each time receiving a punishment from their hands. The brand upon his forehead being the last one. The crimes charged against him were various, but whether or not he was the real perpetrator of these could not be proved. At any rate, he was suspicioned, and punished accordingly.

One day, a trader was found in the woods, murdered. His skull had been clove in twain with a tomahawk, his arms and legs fearfully mangled, and his goods were missing.

Suspicion led to the arrest of Waubesah, and it was for want of proof that he escaped with his life. But the blood of those who tried him was up. The savage was suspended by the wrists from the limb of a tree, until, strong as he was, he fainted from the pain. He was then cut down, and no sooner did his senses return, than he was lashed unmercifully with a raw-hide, the gashes inflicted anointed with a compound of oil and gunpowder. But the savage confessed nothing; and, in order to inspire him with a dread sufficient to put an end to his supposed ravages, a seething iron was applied, in such a manner that it would leave a scar which would never be effaced.

After that, little was seen of the supposed offender. He left his tribe, and secreted himself in the forest, where, no one knew, or particularly cared.

As we have said, the savage was heading his canoe for a certain point of the opposite shore of the river.

It was spring, and the river rapid, consequently requiring more than ordinary labor to prevent the canoe from being carried down the stream with the swift current. But the Ojibwah was an adept with the paddle, and he was not long in arriving at the point he had been heading for.

That point lay directly beneath an overhanging cliff, was

accessible by water, only, and where there was barely sufficient space for a canoe to be placed beyond the reach of the current, a circumstance of which he took advantage.

Then, wading into the water a few feet, he walked a short distance up the stream, when he stepped out upon the pebbly bank. He was now in a copse of willows, and making his way through these, was not long in finding himself in a spot wild beyond description. He had entered a narrow ravine, and before him ran a stream of water which, as it ran on to the river a few yards below, dashed over huge boulders, until the waters presented the appearance of a seething cauldron. Growing upon the banks of the stream, on either side, were enormous trees, which served to give the spot, even in mid-day, almost the gloom of night.

It was a place known far and wide, as well to the trapper as to the red-man. The former ever approached it with awe, and the latter spoke of it as "Hega-sha-loha"—the "place of death."

Nothing new, however, was the place to Waubesa. He had been there often; and the awe it once had inspired him with, had long ago died out.

As he approached the verge of the torrent, the Ojibwah came to a halt, and cast his eyes about him in a quick, suspicious manner. Not a tree, not a bush escaped his practical scrutiny, and a gleam of satisfaction flashed across his features, as he came to the conclusion that the coast was perfectly clear.

"Ugh!" he muttered to himself. "Waubesa is safe. No pale-face is near."

Then, carefully calculating every step ere he took it, the savage entered the seething water. Indeed, so strong was the force of the torrent, even close to the bank, that one less experienced than the Ojibwah would have been swept from his feet at once.

Appreciating the danger he was incurring, the savage pressed on, boldly, yet with the utmost of caution, until he arrived at a rock, some few yards from the bank, from which he had entered the water. The rock was of huge dimensions, and the only one which towered up too high for the water to dash over.

Grasping a firm hold of it, the red-skin drew himself out of the water to the top of this rock, which was perfectly level. Here was disclosed to his gaze a wide fissure, wide enough to admit the Indian's body, huge as it was.

Drawing from his belt his tomahawk, he dealt several hard raps on the rock's surface. A moment or two later, his signal was answered; and, without more ado, he commenced to descend the opening in the rock. As he descended, the passage widened until it ended in a damp, dark cavern, some fifteen feet square, and lighted by a log-fire.

Seated near the fire, on a rude bench, was the individual who had answered the signal of the Ojibwah, and whose house the cavern was. As he rose up on the entrance of Waubesa, he showed himself to be a man not far from forty years of age, of medium stature, dark complexioned, and possessed of a pair of dark, glittering eyes. His face, care-worn, and, at times, haggard, had once been very handsome. His head was finely shaped, his forehead rather broad than high, and his rich hair, worn long, fell in curls upon his shoulders. But misery, hatred and vindictiveness had accomplished their labor, and no one would have recognized him as the gay, accomplished man of years ago.

The entrance of the Ojibwah caused him no surprise. On the contrary, from the inquiring expression upon his face, and the words he addressed to the Indian, that he had been expected was certain.

"Well," he said, "you are back. Have you any news?"

"Ugh! yes," replied the savage, seating himself upon the cavern floor, close to the fire. "Waubesa has found that the pale-face goes to-night to the settlement to dance."

"Ha!" exclaimed the man, the flashing of his eyes increased by the words he had just heard. "And his daughter, too?"

"Yes."

"And there will be no one to guard the cabin but his man, Rollo. It will take great care on our part, Waubesa, to avoid him, for he is a devil, when aroused. Thrice, now, has the hated Arfort escaped me, and each time through him. But who knows but that this night may see my end accomplished, and be whom I long to crush, in my power."

And, carried away by his own words, the man strode across the cavern again and again, clenching his hands, as if he held the object of his thoughts in his grip. But suddenly he paused, and turning to the savage once more, he said:

"Waubesah, remember that, hate, hate, hate him as I do, I do not seek his life—at least, not yet. For, as he robbed me of my love, my hope, so will I now retaliate, and rob him of his. As he robbed me of my good name, and caused me to be branded with the name of "Thief," so will I rob him of that which is dearer than a good name itself."

The latter part of these words was addressed to himself rather than to the savage, who, used to these outbursts, sat calmly gazing into the fire.

"Waubesah," said the white at length, beginning to grow cooler, "where does this man, Rollo, generally keep himself, when his master is absent?"

"Waubesah knows not," was the reply.

"Inside the cabin, probably. If so, we must contrive to get him outside, by some means or other."

The Indian grunted assent, and after some further conversation the two prepared to quit the cavern, the man first fastening around his waist a belt, in which he next stuck a brace of heavy pistols, each being carefully charged.

Emerging from the cavern into the open air, the two found themselves in almost total darkness. The moon had risen, but its light was insufficient to penetrate into that glen, which defied even the sunlight itself.

But this was a circumstance to which neither of the two gave a second thought; but, boldly entering the water, found their way safely to the bank. Pressing forward, they reached the river, and from thence passed to the canoe which the Ojibwah had left under the cliff. Embarking in this, Waubesah seized the paddle, and the two soon found themselves on the opposite bank. They then debarked, secreted the canoe in a copse of hazel bushes, and plunging into the forest, pressed forward at a rapid pace.

Half an hour later found the two near where Rollo and young Amboy had met, a few days previous; and then, with a parting admonition to the savage, the white jumped the

fence and made his way through the belt of trees. The Ojibwah watched him until he was no longer to be seen, and then, opening wide his hideous mouth, gave burst to a yell that echoed and re-echoed through the forest.

Scarcely had the noise died away, when the noise of some one making his way hurriedly through the brushwood reached the ears of the savage, who, crouching behind a bush, awaited what would happen.

A few moments later a man emerged into view. It was Rollo. The ruse of the Ojibwah had proved successful; and as he saw it, a smile of satisfaction shot across his ugly features.

Reaching the fence, Rollo gazed about him.

"Wal! I swow!" he exclaimed, seeing nothing. "I shed like to sot eyes on the craytur as made that air noise. It wasn't human, I reckon."

But seeing nothing to detain him, he soon moved off, wending his way back to the cabin, whistling as he did so.

Soon after, footsteps again reached the ears of the watchful Ojibwah, and these belonged to his white companion, Kyd.

"Well," said the latter as the two met. "It's all right. I've got what I wanted at last."

"Ugh! Meet Rollo?"

"No. I heard him, though. Now for the other, the beautiful Maud. Yes, Wanbesah, before long she will be my own. So, let's for the settlement at once."

In his excitement, Kyd spoke in a tone above that which time and circumstances warranted.

The Ojibwah was not loth to depart from the spot; and a moment later, both became lost in the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRAIL.

WHEN the Ojibwah, about to enter the abode of Kyd, supposed himself to be unwatched, he was mistaken. He was watched, and had been from the time his canoe had shot out from the opposite bank of the river.

His watcher was a young Indian, Kegonsa, who had so narrowly escaped a severe punishment a few mornings before. The young Indian knew Waubesa well. Indeed he had cause to so do; and facts which do not belong to this story had made the two mortal foes to each other.

When, therefore, the young savage, secreted in a copse of willows, beheld his enemy crossing the stream, a gleam of satisfaction shot across his features and his hands sought his bow, to the string of which he fitted an arrow.

Never once withdrawing his eyes from the figure in the canoe, Kegonsa waited with the patience peculiar to his race until the canoe reached the river's bank, but some distance down the stream, beneath, as has already been narrated, a high cliff.

Then, seeing this, with a baffled expression on his face the young Indian rose to his feet. He was on the point of quitting his place of concealment, when the splashing of water reached his acute ears. Quickly dropping once more to his knees, he parted the willows before him with his hand, and gazed forth. Almost on the instant his eyes fell upon the figure of Waubesa, whose watchful eyes were looking about him in every direction.

The young Indian was about to send his arrow whizzing at his enemy's breast, when he came to the conclusion that the willows, so thick were they, might chance to misdirect his shot, and he determined to wait until his foe had passed on to more open ground.

The branded Ojibwah left the water, and entered the copse of willows. He pressed on, and once, so close did he

come to the young Indian that the latter could have touched him with his bow, had he desired to do so.

Kegonsa was far from being a coward, but his heart beat loudly, as his dread foe came so near him, and it was not until the footsteps of the Ojibwah had nearly died away that he dared to rise to his feet, and follow his foe by his freshly made and easily seen trail.

The Ojibwah was next caught sight of by his watcher just as he had entered the torrent. He was seen by Kegonsa to gain the top of the huge rock, and, a moment or two later, to disappear.

To the young Indian, this was a matter which caused him much surprise. From where he stood the aperture down which Waubesa had disappeared was not to be seen, and, believing that something supernatural had to do with it, he shuddered. Indeed, he felt very uneasy. The wild glen was a place he had ever avoided, even in the daytime, and now that it was rapidly becoming dark, being very superstitious, he wished he was far away from the spot. But curiosity is sometimes a far stronger feeling than fear, even, and in this case it was with the young Indian.

He waited—waited—until darkness had come, and in the gloom he beheld Kyd and the Ojibwah emerge from the cavern, and come toward him.

He followed them to the river, and, a few minutes later, beheld both in the Ojibwah's canoe, and crossing over to the other side of the stream.

"Ugh!" he soliloquized. "Where they go? Kegonsa must follow. Kyd no like Arfort, me know. Perhaps go there. Kegonsa will see."

And, slinging his bow to his back, the young Indian strode toward the river, and to a spot where he had concealed his own canoe.

By this, the Ojibwah and his companion had disappeared in the gloom of the night, and Kegonsa, having no need to fear detection by them, at once embarked, and paddled to the opposite bank of the river.

Then, first secreting his canoe in the bushes lining the bank, he plunged into the forest, making his way toward Arfort's cabin. He had not proceeded many rods, when he

fancied he heard sounds. Accordingly he halted. His ears had not deceived him. It was the sound of human voices which had arrested his attention, and he at once knew them to belong to those he was following.

Hitherto, Kegonsa had escaped detection, and, resolving that no mistake or carelessness on his part should betray him now, he glided on after the two with the utmost care.

A couple of miles passed over, and the two reached Arfort's fence, and Kegonsa knew by the sound of their voices that they were but a few yards before him, and had come to a halt.

Curious to observe what was transpiring between the two worthies, yet unwilling to advance further, the young Indian was, for a moment, at a loss how to act. But an idea soon seized him, and before it fairly had time to shape itself, he had commenced to execute it. In close proximity to where he had been standing was a good-sized oak, and it was up this that he had commenced to climb. The lowest branch was some distance from the ground, but the young Indian reached it without noise.

By this time the moon was above the horizon, and by its light Kegonsa detected the Ojibwah and his companion, standing close to the fence.

Scarcely had his eye taken in the scene, when the white parted from his companion, leaped the fence, and disappeared in the grove, the Ojibwah secreting himself in the bushes.

What next transpired has already been narrated. The young Indian witnessed all, and moreover, heard the last words Kyd had spoken to the Ojibwah, before they left the spot.

He knew now that something wrong was intended, and that, too, to the one who had interfered so generously in his behalf a few mornings ago—Maud Arfort. He had divined what the plan of the villains was, and he felt that he was able to frustrate it. Moreover, Arfort himself was in danger, and it may be considered by the reader as somewhat strange, when we inform him that, far from looking upon Arfort as an enemy, Kegonsa had promised, nay sworn, never to lift his

hand against him. To whom had the promise been given? To the squaw, Kee-gee-wewah, whose words had, as the reader is aware, saved him from a terrible infliction.

Released from the tree to which he had been bound, the young Indian no sooner found himself alone in the forest with the old squaw, than his pent up anger broke forth, and he vowed vengeance against Arfort, and all others of the white race who should ever fall into his hands. But the squaw pacified him. She told him that he had white blood in *his* veins. Nay, more, that *Jasper Arfort was his own father!*

The words of Kee-gee-wewah were true. Soon after coming West, Arfort had met with a beautiful Ojibwah girl, and he married her. But his passion soon cooled, for he had met one of his own race whom, he felt, he could love better—the mother of Maud. A year after his marriage with the beautiful Ojibwah she died, leaving him an only son, Kegonsa. Then Arfort was married to his second wife, and his son consigned to the care of the squaw, Kee-gee-wewah.

Time went on, and by Arfort his boy was forgotten until a few mornings ago, when the squaw whispered in Arfort's ear:

"Remember Agramona! He whom you would punish is your own son!"

Thus was it that Kegonsa escaped his punishment—and thus was it that Arfort's cruelty to him was forgotten.

The Ojibwah and his companion had hardly disappeared when Kegonsa descended the tree, and moved off in a direction exactly opposite that taken by them.

He ran forward as rapidly as the nature of things would allow, and in less than half an hour, found himself on the bank of the river, and in close proximity to a small-sized log-cabin.

Without any ceremony, the Indian opened the door, and stepped within. The cabin, scantily furnished, was lighted up with a candle, which was placed upon a table, near which was seated the owner of the domicile. He was a medium-sized man, strongly built, and whose every appearance denoted one who passed his life in the forest.

"Hullo! Kegonsa," he exclaimed, as the young Indian entered, "what's up now?"

In answer to the trapper's words, Kegonsa narrated what had transpired since sunset, at the conclusion of which the man whistled.

"So the varmint is on the rampage ag'in, is he? Wagh! I thort he hed had enough afore this. But he'll get enough, the next time I lay my hands on him, I reckon, for, bu'st my b'iler! ef I don't fotch him out o' his moccasins in less than a month, Kegonsa, my name airn't Steve Bevit."

"The pale-face maiden must be saved," replied the Indian.

"Sartin. Whar think ye, Kegonsa, shall we be the most likely to come across 'em?"

"At the settlement."

"Very good. Howsomedever, it don't matter much, for Beppo, hyar, kin foller thar trail, easier nor fallin' off a log."

On hearing his name mentioned, the dog, to whom the trapper alluded, came forward. He was a small-sized Scotch terrier, extremely vicious to those he did not happen to know or fancy, but very intelligent and well trained. He stood gazing up into his master's face, who, however, did not notice him until he had seized his rifle, and was in readiness to depart with his dusky companion.

All three now quitted the cabin, and were soon making for the spot where Kyd and the Ojibwah had halted, close to Arfort's fence.

This was reached, and the dog put upon the scent. The little animal was an adept at this species of work, and by its aid, the two men were able to follow the trail both easily and quickly.

The trail led toward the settlement, the outskirts of which were nearly reached, when the dog came to a sudden stop. Steve and Kegonsa instantly imitated his example.

"Hist!" whispered the trapper. "The game is ahead."

Both men listened intently, but heard nothing save the sighing of the wind in the tree-tops.

A few feet more were glided over, when, parting the bushes with his hand, the trapper beheld the forms of those of whom he was in search.

The spot was some little distance from the clearing, on which the settlement of Montville stood, and close to a narrow path. Both men had their backs turned toward the trapper, and were, of course, unconscious of his presence. They were evidently waiting. Both were seated on the ground, their heads bent forward, as if listening. Imitating the example of their foes, by seating themselves on the green sward, the trapper and Kegonsa waited.

An hour and over went by, when, suddenly the sound of approaching feet could be heard, coming along the path, from the direction of the village.

The trapper glanced eagerly at the two before them. They had assumed a crouching attitude, and resembled two animals about to spring upon their prey, rather than human beings.

The footsteps sounded nearer and nearer. And, a few seconds later, Arfort, followed by Maud, leaning upon the arm of Henry Amboy, came into view.

CHAPTER V.

A FOILED PROJECT.

THE backwoods dance given was the first that Amboy had ever attended, and, had there been nothing else there, he would have enjoyed it immensely. But something else there was—Maud. Whenever her bright eyes met his, and that was often, he felt his heart beat as it had never done before. Indeed, he felt how dear a friendship he had for her, and this it was that prevented his speaking to her much, although the opportunities were many. He was afraid of betraying himself, and how might she receive his regards? Perhaps with scorn. Her father was well off—he was poor. Besides that, perhaps she had a lover already? The thought pained him, but he could not banish it from his mind, try as he would. “No,” he said to himself, “I will never disclose my feelings until I know, beyond a doubt, whether her heart is free or not.”

It was in this state of mind that he was, until the dance ended; and then, approaching the young girl, he offered her his arm.

For a moment—for it was but for a moment—she had it in her mind to refuse him, for his coldness had stung her to the quick. But her better nature interfered, and the proffered arm was accepted, with a cold "Thank you."

As for Arfort, he, like three or four others, had not joined in the dance, but, in an adjoining room, had passed the evening with card-playing. He now joined his daughter and Amboy, and the trio at once took their departure.

Unconscious of all danger, the little party passed over the clearing, and entered the forest, Arfort taking the lead. A narrow path led from the village to Arfort's cabin, and it was now along this they were passing.

Presently they arrived at an open spot, and the watchful eye of Arfort detected a sight which brought him to a sudden stop, and sent an icy chill through his veins. Young Amboy, too, perceived it, and so did Maud, a half-smothered cry escaping her lips. Before them stood Kyd and the demon-like Ojibwah. Arfort knew both; but the young man, on the contrary, had never set eyes on either, before that moment.

The situation was a thrilling one. For a moment, both parties stood eying each other, neither uttering a syllable. Kyd was the first to break the spell. Stepping a pace or two forward, his glittering eyes fixed upon Arfort, he said:

"So, villain! we have met, at last, face to face. You know me, I believe?"

If he had expected a reply, he was mistaken. There was none.

"Behold me—he whom you so wronged. You must repay me, and at once."

Jasper Arfort was any thing but a brave man. As he listened to the man's words, he trembled like a leaf.

"Repay you? How do you mean?" he managed to faintly ask.

"I will tell you," was his answer. "She"—pointing at Maud—"is your daughter, I believe."

"Yes."

"Give her up to me. I will marry her, and, from that time, all my enmity toward you shall cease, Jasper Arfort."

It would be impossible to depict the feelings of young Amboy, mingled as they were with anger, surprise and horror, as the words fell upon his ear. But he kept quiet, and listened eagerly for Arfort's answer. It came.

"Surely you do not mean it? If you do, I—I—I refuse."

"Very well, sir. Then I must use force to accomplish my purpose."

The crisis had come. Both Kyd and the Ojibwah sprung forward, and with weapons drawn.

Equal to the emergency, Henry Amboy whipped out his revolver. But before he had time to use it—before the parties had time to close, the crack of a rifle rung through the forest, followed immediately by the twang of a bow. Both Kyd and Waubesa stopped short, the former wounded slightly by an arrow, the latter by a bullet in his shoulder. The trapper and Kegonsa sprung from out the bushes. The former grasped his clubbed rifle, the latter his tomahawk.

The Ojibwah, the instant his eyes fell upon his new and unexpected enemies, essayed to lift his hatchet, but his right arm, for a time was useless. With an ejaculation of rage, he leaped aside, just in time to avoid a bullet from Amboy's revolver, and disappeared in the bushes. Kyd would have imitated his example, but for the trapper, who was too quick for him. Approaching the villain, he raised his rifle, felling the man to the earth.

Leaving Arfort, his daughter and Amboy to pursue their way homeward, the trapper and Kegonsa resolved upon following after the Ojibwah to effect his capture. But before quitting the spot, Kegonsa approached the prostrate Kyd, and kneeling down by his side, placed his ear to the other's mouth. He could detect nothing; and coming to the conclusion that the man was dead, from the terrific blow he had received Kegonsa was about to rise to his feet, when something on the ground caught his eye. It was a piece of paper; and, without being detected, he grasped it, and quickly concealed it.

The chase after Waubesa was fruitless. The dog, Beppo, before a dozen rods had been passed over, came to a stand-

still, and gave vent to a low whine. The trapper knew, by this, that the trail was lost. Accordingly, they retraced their steps to the body of Kyd, who lay as still as when they had left it.

"Wagh!" said Steve. "He air deader nor a meat-ax, I reckon. Seein' he war a Christian, we mout as well bury him."

Both knelt down, and, with their hatchets and hands, hollowed out a hole sufficiently large to contain the body, which was soon deposited in it, and covered over with the earth.

A moment or two later, the trapper and his companion left the spot, heading for the former's cabin.

CHAPTER VI.

WAUBESAH AND HIS ALLIES.

EARLY the following morning, Jasper Arfort, attracted by a strong feeling of curiosity, visited the scene of the last night's encounter. Arrived here, the freshly-made grave presented itself to his eyes, bringing to his mind an intense feeling of relief. He felt certain that the grave had been made for Kyd, but, wishing to know beyond the shadow of doubt, he wended his way homeward, when, summoning Rollo to his presence, he dispatched him to the cabin of Steve Bevit.

In the course of a couple of hours the man returned, bringing back with him the information that the grave Arfort had seen belonged, as he had supposed, to Kyd.

If Arfort had felt easy before, he felt doubly so, now that all doubts had been removed—if doubts he had had. And resolving to enjoy a day's shooting in the forest, he seized his shot-gun and sallied forth.

He returned about sundown, and the first one who met him was Henry Amboy.

"Mr. Arfort," said the young man, a troubled expression upon his face, "the paper you showed me yesterday, I am

sorry to say, I am unable to find, although I have spent the greater part of the day in searching for it."

On hearing this, Arfort turned somewhat pale, and said, in an angry tone:

"Where did you leave it?"

"On the table in your own room, supposing it would be left untouched. I intended setting to work on it the first thing this morning."

Without another word, Arfort passed to the inside of the cabin, and entered the room which the young man had just mentioned.

He was gone some time and when he returned to Amboy's presence, his face was livid with passion.

"Young man," he said, "that paper must be returned. I delivered it to you, and you have secreted it."

"I deny it," coolly returned the accused.

"Then you are a thief! Leave! And do it as quickly as you know how."

In all probability, Jasper Arfort would have been stricken to the ground, had not Maud, alarmed at her father's angry voice, come thither to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. In an instant, the young man subdued his wrath, but stung at the insult he had received from her father, he turned upon his heel, and quitted their presence. Entering the room which had been assigned him, he seized his rifle, and the few other articles belonging to him, and, without further ado left the cabin.

He passed through the grove, leaped the fence, and then plunged into the forest. But he did not go very far without coming to a halt.

"Where am I going?" he soliloquized. "Alas! I know not; and in an hour it will be dark."

And for some moments he communed with himself, his face wearing, the meanwhile, an expression of intense anxiety. But, Henry Amboy was not one who easily desponded. The troubled expression presently disappeared, and he said to himself:

"Never mind; I can sleep in the woods, here; and as for starvation, I need not fear that, as long as I have my rifle. Bah! a snap for Arfort's cabin!"

And, whistling a merry air, he started off again through the forest. By the time that the sun had sunk below the horizon he had put some distance between himself and Arfort's cabin; and feeling somewhat weary, he threw himself down on the green sward, beneath a clump of hazels.

A few minutes more, and he was asleep.

How long his slumbers would have continued, had they not been disturbed, is impossible to state.

But disturbed they were, and by a wild whoop, which instantly awoke him. He raised to a sitting position, somewhat alarmed.

Night had long since arrived, but its darkness in that immediate vicinity was dispelled by a fire which had been kindled in an open piece of ground, a few yards from where Amboy sat. This, too, was not without its effect upon him, and, peering through the bushes, he surveyed the scene before him.

Seated in a circle around the fire, which had been kindled of dry branches, and burned brightly, were a score or more of savages. A more ferocious looking set it would have been hard to pick out. Each warrior was of very low stature—with only one exception—of demon-like mien, their physiognomies having been rendered still more devilish by a generous application of soot and vermilion.

Nor was this all. Another there was—one whom the reader already knows—Waubesah, the Ojibwah. The fiend was seated quietly among the others, and like them, smoking a calumet of kini-ki-nik. His eyes were gazing vacantly into the fire, as if their owner was unconscious of everything, save the subject of his meditations.

Henry Amboy hardly had time to take in this, when a rustling sound behind him caused him to turn round. Crouching close to the ground was the form of a human being—an *Indian*. The surprise of Henry was great, but, quick as thought, his hand grasped the stock of his revolver, and the hammer of the weapon was raised with equal dispatch. But, as the click of the weapon reached the ears of the Indian, he started, at the same time ejaculating:

"Ugh! pale-face. No shoot. It be Kegonsa."

And, before the last word hardly had time to pass from his

lips, the Indian, with a serpent-like motion, glided forward, placing himself in close proximity to Henry. The young Indian was at once recognized by Amboy. Still advancing, Kegonsa parted the bushes in front of him, an expression of hatred and passion darkening his countenance, which wonderfully altered his wonted calm features.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, loud enough only for Amboy to hear him. "The enemies of the Ojibwahs, the cursed Sioux! What want they here?"

"Sioux!" said Amboy, who had hitherto supposed them to be Ojibwahs. "Do they come to these parts often?"

"Ugh! they do come often. Many battles have they fought with the Ojibwah warriors, who hate them as they do the crawling serpent."

The last words spoken by Kegonsa had not escaped his lips, when a sudden movement was seen on the part of the Sioux. Their calumets had been smoked empty, and were now laid aside. Mutttered words went the round of the circle, and then ceased by the rising of Waubesa.

The calm, vacant expression of a few moments ago was to be seen no longer. His face now wore a look of hatred, as he let loose his voice in a storm of furious words, gesticulating at the same time violently with his left arm.

His words were not without their effect. The faces of his Sioux listeners scowled more horribly than before, and their hands twitched as if actuated by a common impulse to grasp their tomahawks, and spring to their feet. The Ojibwah spoke in the Sioux tongue, which was as well known to him as his own; and to Amboy, of course, his words were perfectly unintelligible. But it was not so with Kegonsa. He knew the meaning of the words as well as he who gave them utterance.

Presently, the harangue of the Ojibwah was finished, and his place was taken by one of the Sioux. The latter was less violent in his words than the other, but the effect was no less great on his hearers.

For upwards of an hour did this scene last, one speaker following another in quick succession, then the savages, almost simultaneously, leaped to their feet. By their movements, it was plainly evident that they were about to quit the spot.

Chattering like magpies, they entered a thicket of young hickories, from which they soon returned, each Sioux leading by the bridle a horse. A moment later, they were mounted, and led by the Ojibwah, soon became lost, both to sight and hearing.

CHAPTER VII.

A VILLAIN'S REWARD.

With a look well understood by the young Indian, Amboy turned toward him.

"Ugh! The young pale-face understands not the meaning of the serpents. Listen, and Kegonsa will tell him."

Amboy did listen, and the words he heard made him almost speechless. Instigated by the dread Waubesa, the Sioux were about to attack Montville that very night. Like a thunderbolt were the settlers to be fallen upon, and the savages expected not one would escape. This accomplished, they were to proceed to the cabin of Arfort, and conclude their hellish work by murdering him, and bearing off his daughter. For the latter job, Waubesa informed his allies, they would be well paid; and by whom? By Kyd.

Kegonsa had learned that that villain was yet alive. He had heard Waubesa vaunt how he had waited until the coast was clear, hiding in the adjacent bushes, and then rushing forth, unearthed the villain, who, after all, had only been stunned by the trapper's blow.

"Good God! Kegonsa, what is to be done?" asked Amboy, at the conclusion of the fearful recital.

"Ugh! Know the way to the settlement?"

"Yes—or at least I could find it, by a little directing."

"Follow the river for three miles, and it will take you there."

"Well. What then?"

"Tell the pale-faces that the serpent Sioux will be upon them, and they will prepare to meet them. Then go to Ar-

fort's and tell him the same. He can hide in the forest until morning, and then the Sioux will be far away."

"And you—"

"Kegonsa will fly with the speed of a deer to the lodges of the Ojibwabs, who will meet the Sioux face to face. Ugh! not one shall escape."

Without waiting a moment longer, the two parted, Amboy taking a course which would at once bring him to the river.

This reached, he turned his face down the stream, and followed it along the bank at a rapid pace.

Having no fear of falling in with the Sioux, as they had taken a different course, he was able to make rapid progress, his speed checked at times, only, by thick copses of bushes. But these were small difficulties, and he presently had the intense satisfaction of arriving at the outer edge of the clearing upon which the settlement stood.

The moon being obscured with black clouds, the night was very dark; but, possessing a pretty accurate knowledge of the spot, he was able to find his way to the block-house without any serious difficulty.

Amboy entered the unguarded stockade, and then gained the inside of the fort itself. Raising his voice he called aloud to whosoever might chance to be there. A moment after he was answered.

"Halloo, thar! what's up?" demanded a voice from within one of the apartments.

"Show yourself and I will answer," Amboy replied.

A few moments elapsed, and then the impatient young man had the satisfaction of being confronted by half a dozen men, who, as it was not the season for them to ply their calling, made the fort their abode.

In as concise a manner as possible, Amboy related what had transpired that night, concluding by exhorting the trappers to warn the settlers of their peril. But, to the young man's surprise, his words were received with the utmost *sang froid*.

The fact was, Henry was a stranger to them, and one and all were under the impression that he was only attempting to create a needless alarm. Therefore, it is needless to state

how long the delay would have continued, had not the arrival of another upon the scene happened, and this in the person of Steve Bevit.

Bursting in among them, with the utmost haste, he exclaimed :

Bu'st my b'iter, boyees, if ye've got much time. A cased band o' Sioux air comin' on, quicker 'n a beaver kin wag his tail in flood time!"

Inwardly thanking the trapper, and leaving the warning of the settlers to them, Amboy hurried off toward the cabin of Arfort.

Here we will leave him, and relate what was transpiring at the cabin, at that hour.

Almost at the same instant that Amboy arrived at the settlement, a figure stole noiselessly into Arfort's cabin, making his way toward one of the apartments from the window of which streamed a light.

Reaching the door, it was opened, and the figure entered ; but so noiselessly did it move that it was not until Arfort was touched on the shoulder that he turned. To his horror, he beheld the form of the supposed dead—Kyd.

With a half-stifled cry of terror, Arfort sprung up, his eyes fastened upon his visitor as if there existed about him some strange fascination.

For a few moments—it seemed an hour to Arfort—the spell was continued ; then Kyd, advancing a step forward, said :

"Jasper Arfort, you, and you have cause for it, fear me. But, listen. I have not come here to harm you. So seat yourself, and we will talk like friends."

On hearing this, the fears of Arfort were somewhat allayed. He seated himself ; and Kyd, taking a chair from the further corner of the room, imitated his example.

"Arfort," he said, "you remember my words to you last night. Well, have you changed your mind?"

Arfort returned no answer to the question.

"Do you desire this enmity between you and me to cease, or continue?" was next asked.

"Kyd," said the other, in almost a tone of supplication, "wronged you, I confess. I ask your forgiveness."

"You shall have it, Arfort, but only on the condition I mentioned last night. I am your daughter's equal, in both birth and education. Is that not true?"

"It is."

"Then why do you object to my marrying her?"

"Because I am afraid that—" He hesitated.

"Go on."

"I am afraid that she could not love you."

"On your honor, Jasper Arfort, is that your only reason?"

"On my honor, it is."

"Enough! I will yet win her! She has no other lover?"

"None," answered Arfort.

"Who is that young man who was with you last night?"

"One whom I hired to do a piece of business for me. I dismissed him, however, this afternoon."

On learning this, the face of Kyd grew brighter; for he had inferred that Amboy might be a favorite with Arfort, and a suitor for his daughter's hand. The conversation lasted some time, and would have continued some time longer, but for the unexpected arrival of Amboy.

Forgetting what had occurred between himself and Arfort, and thinking only of the peril in which Maud and her father were placed, he entered the cabin, and at once, and proceeded toward the apartment in which he expected to find Arfort.

He knocked on the door. It was opened, and by the owner himself.

On beholding the young man, Arfort started back with astonishment. But before he had time to recover himself, or to open his lips to ask the reason of the intrusion, young Amboy boldly entered the room.

It was now his turn to be astonished, which he unmistakably was, the instant his eye fell upon the figure of Kyd, whom he instantly recognized as the chief actor in the encounter of the evening before.

When Henry entered the room, the villain was engaged in the pleasant task of smoking one of Arfort's cigars, enjoying it finely, no doubt, for it was the first one he had seen for six months. But now, even the fascination the fragrant tobacco had possessed over him a moment be-

fore was broken ; and, with a horse-like snort, he sprung in a rage to his feet.

This movement on the part of Kyd caused Arfort to recover the use of his tongue.

"Young man," he demanded, "what brings you here?"

"Something which deeply concerns you."

"Ha!"

"I come to inform you, Mr. Arfort, that a band of Sioux will visit you before morning, led on by that red fiend who in company with that gentleman there, attacked us last night."

Arfort sneered ; but Kyd, walking forward, said, in a voice intended to alarm him to whom the words were addressed :

"You dared to allude to me, I believe?"

"You heard my words, did you not?" was his answer.

"Bah! You young fool! I have only one way to treat young dogs like you."

Rolling his cigar to the side of his mouth, with an air of a bravado, he approached quite close to Amboy, and—the young man knocked him down with a blow between the eyes, at the same time sending him spinning to the further end of the room.

With a howl of rage and pain, more like that of an animal, than a human being, Kyd picked himself up, as soon as the swimming sensation in his head was over.

With great sagacity, he divined that the young man, in spite of his youth, was by far the most muscular, and the villain was, for a moment, at a loss how to act. True, it was possible for him to have shot the young man, but the thought no sooner presented itself, than he dismissed the idea. The deed would, of course, reach the ears of Maud, and would cause her to regard the executor with a feeling of abhorrence which would never heal.

Kyd withdrew his eyes from Amboy, and looked at Arfort, and with a meaning the latter understood. Springing suddenly forward, he caught Amboy around the waist, holding the young man's arms down close to his side.

Kyd saw the movement, and in an instant he ran to Arfort's assistance. The young man struggled, but it was a vain one. He was secured beyond hope of escape, a tightly-drawn

cord fastening his arms to his sides in such a manner that self-extrication was a matter of impossibility.

"Well," said Kyd, "you see we have succeeded in caging you. The blow you gave me was a hard one, and you shall have your just dues for it. If your words are true, and the Sioux do come, I shall hand you over to them. Ha! ha! My young pugilist, they will give you a lesson or two."

Seizing Amboy by the collar, Arfort led him from the apartment, then along a hall, until he reached a door at the further end. This he opened, and violently pushing his prisoner into a small room, closed the door, and at once returned to the presence of the highly-elated Kyd.

"Kyd," said the other, "do you suppose he spoke the truth, regarding the Sioux?" He spoke anxiously.

"Yes, Arfort," answered Kyd; "to tell the truth, I do believe him. But you look alarmed, man. Pray make your mind easy, for I can make it all right with them, you can depend on it."

Eased of his fears, Arfort lit a cigar, seated himself, and the two were again engaged upon the topic the arrival of Amboy had interrupted—Maud.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SPOILED FEAST.

HENRY AMBOY had not much time to reflect upon the fact that he was a prisoner, when he heard the door of the room being softly opened. He waited, and soon, a voice which he loved above all others said in a whisper:

"Henry—pardon me—Mr. Amboy. Are you here?"

"I am, Miss Arfort."

She entered the room softly, and as carefully closed the door.

"I have heard all—all," she said. "I can free you from your situation, but from mine, there is no escape."

Wondering what she meant, Henry was about to put a

question to her, when he felt her bending over him; and the next moment he felt his arms were free. She had severed the cords that bound them.

"Come," she said. "It is unsafe for you to linger here. I will guide you to the door, for I know the way better than you."

Taking the young man by the arm, she led him from the room, and then forward until he found himself outside the cabin.

"Miss Arfort," he said, "you are in trouble. May I ask you what it is?"

"He whom you saw to-night with my father was his greatest enemy," she answered. "Now, they are friends, for my father has promised him that I shall be his wife."

On hearing this, the heart of Amboy seemed to cease its pulsations, and felt heavy as lead. His face turned pale—so very pale that even Maud could perceive it, in the undimmed light of the moon.

But choking down a lump which seemed to rise in his throat, and summoning up all his courage, he asked:

"And can not you love him, Miss Arfort?"

"No, no. *I love another.* He is one whom—"

The young man lingered there no longer—not even to hear the finishing of her sentence, not even to thank her for his escape; but, hurrying away with quick steps, soon became lost to her sight among the trees.

"Oh!" she said, in a low tone. "If he only returned my love! Why, oh! why did he not ask me the name of him on whom my heart is fixed with a strength nothing can ever move?"

She softly entered the cabin, and returned to her own room, but not to sleep. Her thoughts were too painful to allow that.

The moment that Henry Amboy perceived that the trees and bushes hid him from the sight of any one standing near the cabin, he came to a sudden stop.

Curious to see what would transpire at the cabin when the Sioux should arrive, he looked about him for the purpose of hitting upon some spot which would serve to conceal him.

After considering for some moments, he determined to

climb one of the trees near him, from whose branches he hoped to be able to obtain a full view of the cabin, and the grounds about it.

After climbing up for some twenty feet, and seating himself on a good-sized branch, his hopes were not disappointed. Nothing intervened between him and the clearing but a few bushes and saplings, over whose tops he could plainly see.

But scarcely had he secured his position, when a rustling of the bushes informed him that some one was approaching.

He waited. Soon, dark forms, flitting from bush to bush with stealthy foot, met his view. The light of the moon failed to penetrate through the trees sufficiently for the young man to make the forms out, easily, but, after a little time, he succeeded. They were Indians.

Moving in the manner described to a few feet nearer the cabin than was the trees among whose branches was Amboy, the Indians came to a standstill. Concealed by the thick bushes, the young man could see the red-skins no longer, but at intervals he could hear from them soft, guttural expressions.

An hour passed, and the savages still retain their position. What object had they in waiting so long? Henry knew not.

Moment after moment passed, until they amounted to an other hour, but the red-skins were just as stationary as they were the hour before.

The position of the young man had become more than irksome, for the branch of a tree was a seat he was but little used to. He heartily wished that his enemies—as he deemed them—would do something else than sit where they were and give him a chance to descend once more to the ground.

Presently, however, his attention became detracted from himself to a sound which was caused by the rapid hoof-strokes of a horse.

The noise increased each second, until, at a full gallop, a number of mounted steeds emerged into view; and, in less time than it takes to relate it, they formed in a circle around the cabin. In the moonlight, Henry could see their forms plainly. *They were the Sioux.*

Who, then, were those in the bushes? Amboy suddenly

recollected the words of Kegonsa; and inwardly laughing at himself for having taken so many pains to prevent his being discovered by the Ojibwahs—for such they were, those in the bushes near him—he at once descended to the ground. He did this so very quietly that the Ojibwahs, whose attention was wholly occupied by the Sioux on the clearing, did not discover his presence until he was in close proximity to them.

Then, turning suddenly toward him, a dozen hands grasped the young man, not knowing but what he was an enemy. But at that same moment, a voice uttered a few quick words, in Ojibwah, and Amboy was instantly released. Kegonsa had recognized his friend.

The attention of all was again directed toward the cabin.

Waubesah, the Ojibwah, had approached the door, and was about to enter the cabin, when, suddenly, the figure of Kyd presented itself.

The latter addressed a few words to his confederate, who then turned, and repeated them to the Sioux. It was enough. The horsemen wheeled their steeds around, and began to rid the clearing of their presence.

The time for their enemies, the Ojibwahs, had come.

With their war-cry pealing from their lips, they dashed from out the bushes, discharging a volley of arrows as they ran. Half a dozen of the Sioux were pierced through the body, and tumbled from their horses.

For a moment, only, the remainder looked toward their enemies, for that was long enough for them to perceive that a combat against so great a force would only be fatal to themselves; and, with a warning cry, they again put their steeds in motion, and soon plunged into the forest. Luckily for them, the wood, at that point, was not very dense, and they were able to make their way forward, until they reached the prairie, at as fast a pace as their foes could follow them. They reached the prairie, and, five minutes after were riding over it at a gallop, with their pursuers far in the rear.

As for the fiend, Waubesah, on seeing the turn affairs had taken, he had plunged instantly into the cover of the forest, thus making his escape, a thing which Kegonsa exceedingly regretted.

Had Amboy felt so disposed, a word to Kegonsa would have been sufficient to have had the excited red skins return to the cabin, and drag Kyd forth. But he restrained himself, resolving to meet the villain alone, at another time, and heartily chastise him, himself.

Ten minutes later, the clearing had again resumed its wonted appearance of quietness, the Indians having departed, while Amboy and Kegonsa took their course to the settlement, in order to ascertain how things had turned out there.

On arriving at their destination, they learned that, owing to the warning the settlers had received, the Sioux had met with a much warmer reception than that at the cabin of Arfort. Indeed, nearly a dozen lay upon the clearing, the trappers waiting until morning should come, when the dead bodies would be pitched into the river.

CHAPTER IX.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

THE following morning Jasper Arfort, an hour or two after breakfast, met his daughter in the garden, whither she had gone to take her wonted morning's exercise.

"Maud," said her father, "I have something to ask you. How did you like that gentleman whom you met at breakfast, this morning?"

"His manners were all one could desire, father, certainly."

"I do not mean that, Maud: how do you like him?"

"Candidly, father, not at all."

"Why not? He is rich and accomplished, being an old acquaintance of mine."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and will you believe it, Maud?—he has fallen in love with you, although he never saw you before this morning."

On hearing this, she looked her father steadily in the eye, and asked:

"Father, is he not the one who met us in the wood, the other night, and who would have killed you but for the arrival of assistance?"

It cost Jasper Arfort, hardened as he was, a struggle to force a laugh, which he did.

"Why, Maud, what could have put that silly idea into your head? You yourself saw Bevit strike the blow that killed the villain. If you doubt it, go to the spot and you can see his grave. Besides, his name was Kyd—this gentleman's is Montrose."

Shocked by her father's words, which she knew to be the basest of falsehoods, she made no reply; but Arfort continued:

"Yes, Maud, Mr. Montrose loves you. Listen: I now own this cabin, your home, no longer. A year or two before I first saw the beautiful Agramona, my first wife, a rich Frenchman fled, for some reason, to these parts, and who was reputed to have brought his money with him. One day his cabin was entered by the Indians, and after partaking of his hospitality, they cruelly attacked him. By some chance or other, Agramona heard of his situation, and, Indian as she was, her heart was touched. She visited him every day, carrying him food and drink, for a week. Then he died. But before doing so, he handed her a paper, telling her to keep it, for it would tell her where was hidden a quantity of money. She did so; and after I married her, she gave the paper to me. It was written in cipher, and I have never been able to make them out.

"But, on the strength of one day being able to do so, by meeting with one who might be an adept at the work, I borrowed money, bought these grounds with it, and also built our cabin. I have now no hopes of being able to meet my payments, for the paper is lost. Amboy was smart enough to decipher it, and he stole it, knowing its value."

"Are you sure of that, father?"

"I gave him the paper, and that was the last of it. He coolly informed me that it was lost—a likely story."

"I do not believe he stole it, father!"

"Bah! you simpleton! Who else could have done so? But it is not upon that subject I wish to speak. As I have

said, Mr. Montrose has done you the kindness to fall in love with you. You must return it, Maud."

"I can not."

"And why, pray?"

"I love another."

For a few minutes after hearing this avowal Arfort was silent.

"And who," he asked, at last, "is that 'another?'"

"I will tell you, father, on one condition—that you will not, either directly or indirectly, seek to harm him."

"Well—you have my promise."

"On your sacred word?"

"Yes—yes. His name?"

"Henry Amboy."

Had Jasper Arfort been less skilled in a knowledge of the female heart, he would have flown into a passion. But he was too cunning for that, for he knew it would only be the wind that blows the coal into a flame. He would try other means. Accordingly, he answered:

"Indeed! Then you are doomed to disappointment. Amboy, too, is in love, but not with you. He told me many facts relating to himself, and, among the rest, that he loved a young girl in the East. No, Maud; he cares not for you, my girl."

And with a quick pace, her father left the young girl to herself. Did she believe what she had heard? No. She knew her father was opposed to Amboy, and that he would not hesitate a moment, in order to gain his end, to invent a lie. And, on the contrary, Amboy had never given her reason in the least to think he regarded her in any other light than that of a friend.

In the mean while, Arfort entered his cabin, where he met Kyd—*alias* Montrose—who anxiously awaited the issue of the interview between father and daughter.

"Well, Kyd," said Arfort, "her heart is fixed upon another."

"Ha! Upon whom?"

"Why, Amboy. But never mind; we can get him out of the country, by some means or other."

"Yes," added Kyd, "and so that he will never return."

CHAPTER X.

THE SIOUX SPY.

AT the time of our story, the Ojibwabs numbered, in the immediate vicinity of Montville, only a few hundreds. These, by many a bloody conflict with the whites, had learned to their cost that the latter were their masters, and for many months a friendly feeling had existed between the two races.

The only danger the pioneers had to dread were the regular incursions of the prairie savages—the murderous Sioux. These demons would keep away for many months, often, and suddenly would fall upon the settlements without an hour's warning, killing and plundering until satiated.

Early one morning, a few weeks after the occurrences narrated in the last chapter, before the sun had yet appeared above the horizon, the trapper Bevit, standing on the summit of a hill, descried a solitary horseman galloping over the prairie, heading directly for the hill itself.

"Wagh!" ejaculated the trapper, as his eyes caught sight of this, "thet air an Injin. A Sioux, by jingo!" he added, a moment later.

Quickly ducking down his head, he watched the approach of the horseman with a strong feeling of curiosity. When first seen, the Indian was far out on the prairie; but he came on at the very top of his horse's speed, and, in something less than half an hour, he drew in rein at the base of the hill.

Quickly dismounting, he led his steed into a copse of bushes, where he secured it with a lariat. Looking downward, the savage's every movement could be seen by Bevit plainly. Leaving the copse of bushes, the Sioux seated himself at the base of the hill, produced from a bag, slung to his shoulder, a quantity of tasajo, which he devoured with seeming keen relish. His meal ended, he produced his red stone calumet, charged it with the everlasting kini-ki-nik, and lighted it.

By one or two motions on the part of the Sioux, which an ordinary person would fail to detect, and much less to com-

prehend their import, the trapper knew that the savage was expecting some one.

Presently the Indian finished his pipe, and it was restored to its place of keeping. By this time the sun was high above the horizon, and he knew that he was in a dangerous situation. Indeed, he was very uneasy. Ever and anon he would rise to his feet, walk to and fro for a few seconds, and then seat himself again. This had been repeated for some half-dozen times, when the Indian suddenly jerked his head in a listening posture, a look of anxiety at the same time crossing his features. But this, a moment later, disappeared, caused by the sudden arrival of him whom the Sioux had been expecting. This was Waubesa, the Ojibwah.

After the greeting between the two was over, the Sioux paid a visit to the spot where his steed was secured, in order to see if all was right, and then they quitted the spot.

"Wagh!" ejaculated the trapper. "Thar's something about to be hatched, by Geehosephat! They're bound for that skunk of an Ojibwah's den, I'll be bound.

"If I only had Kegonsa with me," he continued, "I could track 'em, an' find out what they air about, for, bu'st me if I understand a word of their lingo."

Leaning on his rifle, he studied the matter over for a few minutes longer.

"Thar's no tellin' whar the young red-skin air to be found. He mout hyur my signal, an' he moun't, also. Leastways, I'll try it."

Shouldering his rifle, the trapper strode rapidly down the side of the hill, plunged into the woods at its base, and kept on at a rapid pace, until he reached his cabin. Entering this, he took from its place of keeping an instrument of his own making, which was at once most decidedly original in idea, and which he used on all occasions when he wanted to summon Kegonsa to his presence.

Placing the instrument to his lips, he was about to send the signal echoing through the woods, when he for whom it was intended himself made his appearance.

"Wagh! I war about to signal ye, Kegonsa. Thar's something in the wind," greeted the trapper.

"Ugh!"

The trapper related what had transpired at the hill.

"We must track the varmints, Kegonsa," he said, in conclusion.

"Kegonsa is willing. He can tell what the Sioux says."

Without more ado, the two found themselves making for the hill. It was not more than a mile and a half from Bevit's cabin, and, as they kept on at a rather rapid pace, it was not long before being reached.

There was no difficulty whatever in finding the trails of the two red-skins, along which the two trackers followed at as quick a pace as caution would admit of.

The trails were nearly as straight as a bee-line for nearly two miles, or until it reached the confines of a marsh, through the center of which ran a wide creek, when, all at once, it obliques sharply to the right.

The two trackers kept on until the trails they were following made another turn, and this time entered the marsh.

"Ugh! They have made for the creek," said Kegonsa, as he came to a halt, an example which was imitated by his companion.

At that portion of the marsh which the trail crossed, it was perfectly open, which, to their annoyance, the two at once perceived. For if the trails were directly followed, the trackers would, in all probability, be seen by the wary Ojibwah—a thing which was the last to be wished.

But further above, the marsh was covered with willows; and, by making their way through these, Kegonsa and the trapper could reach the creek without being discovered. Both knew the stream before them well. It was shallow, and the banks on either side very high; so that, by wading down the channel, they might again strike the trail, when it might be followed without their exposing themselves.

This plan the trackers determined to follow.

Keeping well within the cover of the trees, until they arrived opposite the willows, they entered them, and rapidly made their way in the direction of the creek. This reached, they descended the sloping bank, until they entered the water. This, as they before were aware of, was shallow, and no difficulty was experienced in wading up it.

On reaching the point where Waubesa and his companion,

if they had, on entering the marsh, kept on in a straight line, should have reached the creek, Kegonsa paused, and scrutinized the bank. His experienced eye was not long in detecting the impress of a moccasined foot. The two they were tracking had entered the creek. Had they then crossed over, and climbed up the opposite bank? After a strict examination, the young trapper came to the conclusion that they had not. The soft sand would have left the impress of their feet, but no such signs were visible.

No, they had kept on by, wading along the stream; but whether it was up, or down it, was the next question.

A number of rods further up the creek, it turned to the left, and, as it would be the most likely for the Ojibwah to direct his course in that direction, the trackers thought, they resolved to search for further traces in the same quarter. As they neared the angle of the stream, one or two things which did not escape their vigilant eyes, informed them that they were not mistaken in their hypothesis as to the direction Waubesa and the Sioux had taken.

Peering round the angle of the creek in a cautious manner, the eyes of the two informed them that those they were following had preceded them only a few seconds before. A few feet in front of the trailers was a huge, flat rock, near the bank of the creek, and upon the surface of which was to be seen the impression of a wet moccasin. *It had been made by one of the Indians as he stepped from the water.* Had it been made long, the hot sun would have obliterated all traces of it.

Leaving the creek, Kegonsa and the trapper climbed cautiously up the bank, and peered over. Below them was a small gully, some ten feet in depth, and which opened directly into the creek. Standing at the bottom of this, half concealed by the bushes, was a rude wigwam of skins, and which, the trackers knew to be Waubesa's lair.

Scarcely had their eyes fallen upon the structure, when voices from within it caused Kegonsa to listen attentively. He could plainly hear every word spoken.

"Ugh! The Ojibwahs are like squaws. Their eyes are shut."

This was said by Waubesa, and he used the Sioux tongue.

"Ugh!" answered his companion. "Le Chien knows that.

The Sioux are strong. They number many warriors, and their chief, Yellow Thunder, is feared by his foes."

"Waubesah knows that. Ugh! The Ojibwahs have reason to fear him. But the pale-faces are strong, and to scalp them all will take many warriors."

"Yellow Thunder knows that," replied the Sioux. "The doors of the fort must be opened. Can Waubesah do that?"

For a few seconds the Ojibwah was silent.

"Ugh!" he grunted, at last. "When do the Sioux come?"

"Yellow Thunder will take his warriors on the war-path on the first day of the Sturgeon Moon, and it will take two suns to reach here," replied the Sioux.

"Waubesah can open the doors of the fort, and he will."

"Is Waubesah known to be a friend of the pale-faces?" the Sioux asked.

"No," grunted the Ojibwah.

"Ugh! How, then can he open the doors of the fort?"

"He has friends. They will do it for him."

"The Sioux will not be fooled," replied the spy, in a tone which showed that the last words of Waubesah had not struck him favorably.

"Ugh! Waubesah will stake his scalp upon what he says. What can Le Chien want more?"

"Le Chien is now satisfied."

There the conversation for a time ceased; and when it was renewed, it was only of a character foreign to any thing which has to do with this story.

Feeling satisfied that nothing more was to be learned, Kegonsa and the trapper quitted their position, and made their way back to the trapper's cabin.

Had they desired it, both Waubesah and the Sioux could have been done for at once; but the trapper knew that that would not prevent the incursion of the savages, and, knowing when they might be expected was a fact not to be thought otherwise of than as fortunate. If the present spy was killed, another would be sent out, and then without, perhaps, being discovered.

CHAPTER XI.

MAUD ON THE DEATH-TRAIL.

IN the meanwhile, the suit of Kyd was not progressing at all to his liking. Every day he visited Arfort's cabin, and each time that he did so, the antipathy of Maud toward him increased. Nor was her dislike concealed. Contrary both to the commands and implorings of her father, she took not the least pains to disguise her feelings toward one whom she could never look upon without hatred. Her thoughts were turned constantly toward Amboy, and, as each day passed, her desire to see him once again increased. At length, through the medium of Rollo, she learned that the young man was still in the neighborhood, and passed the greater part of his time in short hunting-excursions, and always alone. More than that, she learned that he most always took one direction, which Rollo, after some delay, also discovered.

Early on the morning succeeding the events narrated in the last chapter, Maud appeared before the cabin dressed for a ride. She had not long to wait, when Rollo appeared, leading by the bridle a pony, a beautiful animal, which her father had purchased for her in St. Louis.

Quickly mounting, the frisky little steed started off at a canter, soon leaving the cabin far behind.

When the young girl had entered the wood for some distance, she wheeled her steed to the right, and kept on at as rapid a pace as was possible. There was no path to guide her, but, having been there quite often, she knew the locality well.

Keeping on until the cabin was some miles distant, she arrived at a part of the wood where grew two maples, each of huge proportions. Halting here, she scrutinized the ground closely for a few minutes. At that length of time her eyes detected a trail, strongly defined by some one's having passed over it a great number of times.

Her heart beat joyfully. The trail, she thought must have been made by Henry.

It was yet but early morning, and it was not probable that the young man, if he had started out for a day's sport, had passed over the spot yet; and she resolved to await him awhile.

An hour passed, and found her still alone.

"Ha!" she muttered, with a sigh. "He will not come to-day. But where does this trail lead to? Rollo may be mistaken. Another attraction, and not hunting, may be the object of his coming here so much. I will see. Heigho! Pepe. Let us follow the path further.

But, to the young girl's surprise, the trail, on reaching the maple trees, came to an end. But, despairing not of being able to find further traces of it, she kept on. Making her way through the woods for fifty or sixty rods, she at last, to her surprise and gratification, came across another trail.

But this was a different one from the last. It was much the older of the two, and an hundred fold more easily seen. Keeping along the trail, the young girl rode on. She passed through a thicket of young trees, then across a piece of open ground, and then into a portion of the wood where the trees grew so thickly together that the gloom was not to be penetrated, hardly, by the sun itself. Here she drew in rein, becoming, for the first time, frightened. At that moment, too, she thought she heard a rustling in the bushes, not far distant from her. She gazed in the quarter whence the sound came, but could perceive nothing which could possibly have caused it. Her eyes fell upon an object perched upon the branch of a dead oak a few feet distant. It was an owl, whose great eyes seemed to look ominously at her.

She wheeled her horse about, and was about to make her way back, when a figure which rose up suddenly in her track prevented her. *It was the Ojibwah.*

On seeing the face of the terrible savage, Maud Arfort at once recognized him as the one who, with Kyd, had attacked her father one night some weeks back, and a dreadful sense of peril at once seized her. Her cheeks blanched, her head swam, but, with a heroic effort, she kept her seat.

Standing perfectly erect, his demon-like eyes resting upon Maud, the savage said:

"What wants the pale-face maiden here? This is not

the path which leads to her lodge. *This is the trail of death.*"

The trail of death! She knew what he meant. She had heard it spoken of by Rollo, and whispered by her father. She had heard that it led into a deep ravine, and the unfortunate one who entered that never left it.

It was not the abode of Waubesa, but he seemed to haunt it like an evil spirit. She had heard, too, that there was a reason for this, but what that reason was, was a mystery to all. The hand of the demon was lifted against all men, and it mattered not to him whether their skin was red, or whether it was white.

Even the bold trapper, now never visited it. They had learned, nearly to the cost of half a dozen of their number, that the mystery of the ravine was not to be solved by them as long as Waubesa lived, and perhaps not if he were dead.

All this ran through the young girl's brain like a flash, and her heart seemed to cease-beating with her terror.

"No," continued the Indian. "Let the pale-faced maiden go back to her lodge, and follow the trail of death no longer. She would see a sight which she would dread far more than she does Waubesa, who seeks not to harm her, for she is to be the squaw of his friend."

He referred, of course, to Kyd, whose intentions regarding the young girl were, as the reader knows, well known to him. He continued:

"The trail of death leads to a spot where the bones of the pale-faces and Ojibwahs lie bleaching with the sun of summer, and the snows of winter. The deadly rattlesnake makes it his home, and the wolf lies in its caves. Again, let the maiden return. Waubesa seeks not to do her harm."

During the recital of these dreadful words, Maud had closed her eyes, but when he ceased speaking, she opened them. The Ojibwah was gone!

Lingering there not an instant longer, the young girl flew through the woods as fast as her steed could carry her toward her home.

Suddenly, when two miles had been placed between her and the place where she had encountered the Ojibwah, another

figure met her gaze—a figure which caused her to rein in with a jerk. It was Henry Amboy.

She was the first to speak, but it was not until each had been looking at the other for some little time.

Their conversation continued but for a short time, and then they parted, both with heavier hearts than before.

He, supposing her heart to be given to another, and loving her himself, said but little, while she, piqued at the young man's seeming indifference toward her, acted equally unconcerned.

"He loves me not," she said, as she galloped homeward. "My father told the truth, and I must never see him again—never, never!"

CHAPTER XII.

A DIABOLICAL PROMISE.

LATER that very day, Waubesaah, the Ojibwah, visited the abode of Kyd—the cave in the glen, and immediately after the interview between the two worthies, the latter at once repaired to the cabin of Arfort. This time it was not Maud who attracted him thither, but it was on a special errand with Arfort himself.

Arriving there, the owner of the cabin was found to be at home, and a few moments more found both men seated in Arfort's private room.

"Well, Kyd—excuse me, Montrose, I mean—what now? Some more of Maud's pranks toward you, eh? Bah! man, it will not do to despair. 'Tenacity wins,' you know."

"No, Arfort," replied Kyd, "I do not wish to speak about her to-night. My coming is for a different purpose."

"Ha!"

"Now, Arfort," Kyd continued, "I want to be candid with you, and shall expect you to act in a like manner toward me. You don't own this cabin—or, at least, you still owe the money which you borrowed to build it with."

"I may as well own the truth. You are right."

"I know so. Well, have you the means to raise the money?"

"No; and unless I can pay the money before the seventeenth of next October, I am done for. I haven't a cent to ward it."

"But you can avoid the payment."

"How?" eagerly queried Arfort.

"By getting rid of old Hanks, your creditor. Don't look so frightened, man. I don't mean that you shall get rid of him *directly*—but in an *indirect* manner."

"I entirely fail to comprehend you, Kyd."

"Do you? Then listen. I have received reliable information that the Sioux are about to set out on the war-path. Their head chief, Yellow Thunder, has organized a large party, and they intend to, if the government troops at Fort Snelling do not get wind of it—and it is not probable they will—carry the expedition as far south as Blue Creek. Now, the fort at Montville is a strong one, and it would take the Sioux a longer time than they can spare to take it, unless it can be entered by—well, by stratagem."

"Why not say treachery, Kyd?" asked Arfort, who began to see the drift of the other's meaning.

"Well, treachery, if you like the word better. 'Any thing is fair in love and war,' you know. But to continue: If some one will, at a given signal, open the stockade gate, the Sioux will be able to carry all before them. Old Hanks, and the notes he holds against you, will be jerked out of existence in a twinkling by one blow of a Sioux tomahawk."

"Well?"

"Well. Can't you do the job? If old Hanks lives, you will lose your home. If he dies, the cabin will be your own. Your own life will be spared, I promise you; for Yellow Thunder is a man of his word, if his skin is red."

"As to my life," replied Arfort, "now that I am aware of my danger, I can save it by leaving for parts where the savages won't dare to penetrate."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Kyd, with a look Arfort quailed before. "No, you must not leave. I am opposed to that."

Maud is a prize far too valuable for me to be fooled out of in a manner so simple as that."

"You, too, have as good a chance to leave yourself; and I shall not attempt to conceal my direction from you."

"I, also, have my reasons for not doing so. Here, where I am not too much known, I am safe."

For some time Arfort was silent. He thought the proposition Kyd had made him over several times; finally coming to the conclusion that, as he was to be a gainer by it, he would be the one to execute the diabolical plot.

"Well," he said, "I will do it, Kyd, on the condition that my life be spared, and my property left uninjured."

"Oa!" said Kyd, rising from his seat, "I promise you that. But, remember, Jasper Arfort, woe be to you if you revoke your promise. Good-night." And the villain took his departure.

Half an hour later found Arfort still meditating deeply over the hellish crime he had promised to commit, when a rap was heard upon the door.

"Come in," was the answer.

Rollo entered.

"Thar's young Amboy out thar," he said, "and he's a-want-in' to see you, mighty bad."

Arfort, for a moment, hesitated, then he bade Rollo request Amboy to walk inside the cabin. The order was executed; and Henry Amboy soon stood once again in the presence of the man who had injured him—but who was *her* father.

The greeting between the two was not very cordial on either side, and which, on being over, Arfort inquired the nature of the other's business.

"Mr. Arfort," said Henry, in reply, "you accused me of being a thief—of stealing this paper."

So saying, the young man produced a piece of paper, folded, and which the eye of Arfort at once recognized.

"Allow me to return it," continued his visitor, tossing it toward the owner of the cabin. "You see, had I been the thief, it is not likely that I should have returned it."

Overjoyed at his having once more possession of the missing paper, Arfort said:

"If I misjudged you, I ask your forgiveness. But how came you to be possessed of the paper, Mr. Amboy?"

"I will tell you. It was given to me by—you know him—Kegonsa. He picked it up from the ground, close to the body of that villain, Kyd, the night he attacked us on our return from the settlement. You remember the night to which I refer, I have no doubt?"

Arfort gave vent to a low whistle. He believed every word the young man had spoken. Several inquiries on the part of Kyd, and several words he had let drop in his presence, was at once conclusive to Arfort that Kyd himself was the real thief. More than that, he knew that Waubesa had informed Kyd of the dead Frenchman's buried money, and the paper which had been stolen was the guide to its whereabouts.

"Yes," said Arfort, "I am pleased to get back that paper, but, in its present state, it is of no use to me. Have you succeeded in deciphering it?"

To his delight, Henry replied in the affirmative.

"I can repeat it word for word," the young man continued. "Shall I do so?"

"Yes, yes!"

"I Jacques Pictoue, having been fearfully and, perhaps, fatally wounded by the cursed Ojibwahs, fear that my end is near. I have been blessed during my hours of pain by the presence of a young squaw, Agramona, who has treated me as a brother. Therefore, let it be known that I have buried beneath my cabin a good sum of money, in gold. Whosoever deciphers this, let him search for the money, and I, a dying man, charge him to give one-half of it to the squaw, Agramona.

"(Signed)

JACQUES PICTOUE."

"Ha!" exclaimed Arfort, when the young man had finished. "Do you know where the cabin is?"

"No," answered Henry. "I have not sought to discover it. But one thing more, and my business is finished. Do you acknowledge your error?"

"I do," answered Arfort, "I do. Forgive me, and henceforth my roof will always welcome you as often as you see fit to place yourself beneath it."

And, a moment later, Jasper Arfort was once more alone.

Did he know where the dead Frenchman's cabin was, or, rather, had been, since it was a heap of ruins? He did. He knew it to be in the ravine, which was only approachable by one path, *and that was the Trail of Death.*

It was in the ravine, years ago, that the rich Frenchman had lived; it was in this ravine that he died, and it was there that walked the demon who dealt death to all who visited it. Did Arfort also know who this demon was? He knew it well; and he whispered to himself:

"Before I can get this gold, Waubesah must perish."

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUCCESSFUL COUP.

EVER since the night on which Waubesah, the Ojibwah, with his allies, the Sioux, had made their successful attack on Montville, it was determined upon by the various hunters and trappers who made the settlement the summer rendezvous, that the branded demon should be at once hunted down. This time, he was to be allowed no quarter.

Nor was he all. Other savages than he had been outlawed by their own people, and who were known to be secreted not far away. These, no less than Waubesah, were constant sources of annoyance, if not danger; and the sooner they were put out of the way, the better would it be for the community at large.

Late the very night after the scenes in the preceding chapter occurred, a dozen or more hunters and trappers might have been seen to leave the fort, and make their way to the river.

Among them were Bevit and Henry Amboy, the latter who, on account of his jovial disposition, was a great favorite at the ford, having been allowed the privilege of accompanying the party at his earnest request.

Having gotten, during the day, every thing in perfect readiness, a couple of canoes were drawn from their places

of concealment; and in less than three minutes the entire party was afloat.

Four of the trappers in each canoe handled a paddle a piece, and a few strokes sufficed to send the light crafts far out from the bank.

As had been predicted during the day, the night was a wild one and on that very account had it been chosen. The wind blew a perfect gale. Dark clouds rolled along the sky, precursing a storm, and the darkness was Egyptian. In fact, a night more favorable for the success of their enterprise could not have been picked. Their course lay up the river.

When about four miles above the settlement, one of the trappers suddenly exclaimed:

"Whoop! 'Thur's the light! Ba'st my b'iler? but I can't tell whether it comes from the shore, or from the island."

Resting on their paddles, those who grasped them, they, along with the rest, gazed at the object mentioned. It was a camp-fire, about half a mile farther up the stream, and whose glare was reflected far out on the water.

"Wagh!" exclaimed Bevit, after surveying this for a few seconds. "A fire kindled on shore wouldn't be seen so far out. The red-skins air on an island."

Dipping their paddles once more into the water, their course was renewed.

When something over a quarter of a mile had been passed, the trappers perceived that Bevit's opinion was the correct one.

In the center of the river was one of those hundreds of islands, formed by the accumulation of logs, trees and sand, which give both the Mississippi and Minnesota such a picturesque aspect.

The island in question was one well known to the trappers. It was of pyriform shape, some three hundred feet in length, and covered with willows and scrub oaks. The end of the island was only a few feet in width, while at the head it was as many yards; and it was on this latter portion that the fire had been kindled. The fire was a large one, and the boisterous wind carried the sparks in showers over the water.

The tail of the island reached, the trappers debarked.

"The fust thing to be did, comrades," said Bevit, speaking in a whisper, "air to cut the escape o' the red-skins off. It is certain as shootin' that they hev a canoe with them, an' perhaps two o' them."

"Sartin. An' all that we kin do is to sot the crafts adrift."

"Yes; an' that air the hardest part o' the hull job—it air," answered Bevit. "Hullo! Hyur comes the rain. Kiver yer locks, boyees."

The storm which had so long been threatening at that moment broke out. A crash of thunder came, followed by a driving rain, which soon wet the party to the skin.

After some further discussion, the execution of the plan to cut off the escape of the savages from the island was intrusted to Bevit.

Leaving his rifle in the care of Amboy, the trapper skirted along the edge of the island until he reached one of the many copses of willows growing upon it. Looking through this, he beheld close at hand the fire, and those who had built it. He knew the latter at once. They were the outlaw Ojibwabs, and seven in number. All were seated in a circle round the fire, wrapped in their thick blankets, to protect themselves from the rain, and puffing forth wreaths of tobacco-smoke from their long stemmed pipes.

After noting well their position, Bevit quitted the copse of willows, and made his way still nearer to the head of the island. Here, to his gratification, he found the object of his search—or rather, two of them, for the canoes were that in number. They had been pulled up high out of the water, but their extreme lightness enabled the trapper to easily slide them off into the stream.

This done, he made his way back as quietly as he had gone, having never in all his life accomplished a dangerous errand more successfully.

The storm still raged, as fierce as ever. The flashing of the lightning was awfully lurid in the black sky, and the thunder caused the island to tremble like an aspen.

The plan hastily formed by the trapper was this: half their number were to reach the head of the island by their canoe, in order to cut off any of the savages who might run in that

direction, while the remainder were to make the attack from the island itself.

The former portion at once embarked. Among these was young Amboy. As for Bevit, he was among those who were to commence an attack.

The canoe was headed away from the island, until some distance from it, and then directed up the stream, until the head of the island was a hundred yards, or more, below them. Now heading the canoe down the stream, it was allowed to be carried along by the current, being steered only by a single paddle.

Suddenly, the cracks of half a dozen rifles sounded for an instant above the storm, quickly followed by whoops of surprise and yells of pain. The light of the fire enabled those in the canoe to see the island to the very edge of the water, and they beheld the forms of three of the Ojibwahs making for the spot where they had left their canoes.

They were not long in discovering their loss. For a single moment each stood irresolute; then, with a bound, one of the savages plunged headlong into the black river, while the other two, wheeling round, disappeared among the willows.

"Let's arter the varmint as took to the water," said one of the trappers. "The boyees ashore'll settle the hash o' the other two."

Seizing their paddles, the men sent the canoe in the direction taken by the Ojibwah who had sought to escape by swimming.

At length a flash of lightning revealed the head of the red-skin above the water, but before the trapper who sighted it had time to raise his weapon and fire, all was dark again. However, he raised his weapon to his shoulder, prepared for a shot, if the next shot should again reveal the sight. But it did not. Neither did the half succeeding flashes.

Unlike the trappers, who had been looking away from the island, Amboy had been looking *toward* it. Suddenly, during one of the lurid flashes, he caught sight of the object of their search.

The Indian, probably doubting his ability to reach the shore by swimming, had turned again toward the island, from

which, on Amboy's catching sight of him, he was but a few feet distant.

This fact was at once communicated to the trappers, and the course of the canoe was instantly altered.

The Ojibwah reached the island, but it was just as the canoe, also, touched it. At that same instant, too, a flash of lightning lit up the scene, and the red-skin saw one of his enemies bounding toward him. He attempted to draw his tomahawk, but before he had the time to succeed in doing so, a strong hand had clutched him, followed almost instantly by his receiving the stab of a bowie in his chest. The red-skin sunk to the earth, with a low groan. A moment later and he was dead.

The attention of the trappers was now turned toward their companions, who were engaged in discovering where the two savages who yet remained were secreted. This was a matter of some difficulty, as aided by the darkness, the red-skins were able, for a time, to elude their foes easily. At last, however, one of the savages was seen. He was lying flat on the sand, close on the edge of the island, in hopes that this plan would prevent his being discovered. But a bullet through his head showed him his mistake.

Only one of the Indians now remained. Where was he? Not a nook, not a bush on the island escaped the scrutiny of the trappers, but the missing Ojibwah was not discovered.

"Boyces," suddenly said Bevit, his words falling upon the ears of his companions with startling effect, "*what if the red-skin has helped himself to one of our canoes, an' set the other adrift?*"

It needed no more to cause the trappers to dash at once toward the spot where they had left their two canoes. The spot was reached—but *the canoes were gone!*

But scarcely had they made this discovery, when a flash of lightning shot athwart the sky, and, by its light, the savage and one of the missing canoes were seen. As yet, the craft was only a few yards down the stream, and not beyond the reach of the bullets of those on the island.

The next flash came, and instantly a dozen rifles cracked. A wild yell went up, and, literally riddled with bullets, the last of the Ojibwah outlaws perished.

Plunging into the water, one of the trappers was not long in overtaking the drifting craft ; and, shortly after, the other canoe was recovered. Had the trappers been two minutes later, only, in discovering the manner in which the savage had served them, the probabilities were that the red-skin would have escaped.

"Wal," said Bevit, as, soon after, they quitted the island, "thar's only one more o' the varmints as I mean to rub out, an' that air Waubesah."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CAPTIVE HUNTER.

FROM the hour that Jasper Arfort had received a solution of what had been to him, for years, a puzzle, he had been haunted, day and night, by one thought only. That was—how he was to get Waubesah, the Ojibwah, out of the way. While that demon lived, Arfort knew that he would never dare to approach the spot where the money of the dead Frenchman lay buried. The eye of the Ojibwah seemed to never cease its vigilance, for he knew that in the ravine was the gold hidden, although ignorant of the exact locality.

No, the Ojibwah must die, was Arfort's resolve. But who was to commit the deed ? Arfort knew not.

Jasper Arfort was not a cautious man, and, by one or two words dropped by him, in the presence of Kyd, the latter surmised that the former had recovered the paper which had been stolen from him. More than that, Kyd knew, almost to a certainty, that it was Amboy who had returned it to Arfort.

This was, as a matter of course, communicated to the Ojibwah, resulting in the formation of a plan by the two worthies which would, if successful, put them also in possession of the secret.

The morning of the first day in September opened bright, and, at about sunrise, young Amboy sallied forth from the fort, rifle in hand. He bent his course toward the river, which reached, he drew from a clump of bushes a light, birch

en-canoe. Embarking in this, he shoved off from the shore, heading the craft up the stream.

The current, at that season of the year, was rather sluggish, and he was able to make rapid headway. When about two miles from the settlement, he arrived at a spot where he intended his excursion should end. It was a small island, some ten feet in diameter, covered with willows, and some fifty feet distant from the shore.

Gazing toward the nearest bank of the river, Amboy saw before him a marshy piece of land, scores of acres in extent, without a tree or even as much as a single willow growing upon it.

The objects that had taken him thither were the deer which every morning came to the river to quench their thirst. The animals invariably crossed over the marsh, the young man had been informed, and he congratulated himself on having secured so good a position for the expected sport.

He had scarcely seated himself behind a large willow, when, glancing over the marsh, his eyes caught sight of a few of the expected animals at its furthest extremity.

The deer were coming forward at a slow walk, led by an old buck, whose magnificent antlers inspired Amboy with an intense longing to get possession of them. In the East, he knew they would be regarded as a rare prize; and he resolved that no fault on his part should cause him to lose them.

The animals reached the river, wholly unconscious of the danger that lay in wait for them.

The young man waited until the buck had waded a few feet into the river, and had bent down his head to drink, before he took aim. The click of the rifle caused the animal to jerk up his head, and just as he did so, Amboy's rifle cracked. The bullet struck the animal in his fore-shoulder, but was not sufficient to bring him down. He turned instantly, and, with the remainder of the herd, soon became lost to the sight of the chagrined Amboy.

Mortified at his failure, Henry was about to commence his return to the settlement, when an object floating down-stream, between the island and the bank, met his eye. That object was—as he at once perceived—a freshly-cut chip of wood.

Before the chip had passed out of sight, it was followed by

another and another, until at least a dozen of the small pieces of wood had floated past him.

"What can it mean?" he asked himself; but, without being able to give any solution of the question, he resolved to try and discover their starting-point.

First reloading his rifle, he next stepped into his canoe, and paddled up the stream, keeping in close to the bank.

About two hundred rods above the island he had left, a point of land ran out a short distance into the Minnesota, and it was from around this point that the chips seemed to come.

As he neared the extremity of the point, he rested on his paddle, and carefully looked about him. But nothing of a suspicious nature was detected, and he kept on.

A moment later, he rounded the point.

Then, to the surprise and horror of Amboy, he saw leap from out the bushes lining the bank the form of an Indian, terrible in aspect, and of huge proportions. The two had met before—the savage was Waubesa.

With only a single spring, the Ojibwah cleared the bushes which had concealed him, and another brought him in close proximity to the young man's canoe. Seizing hold of this, the red-skin gave it a wrench which turned it bottom-upward in an instant, precipitating the astonished Amboy into the water.

The surprise of the latter now gave way to anger. But how was he to avenge himself? His rifle and revolvers had been rendered, for the present, useless, and the only other weapon he possessed was a bowie—a weapon deadly enough in the hands of a proficient, but of hardly any more value to Amboy than would have been a clasp-knife.

When thrown into the water, the young man was only a few feet distant from the point, and it took him but a few seconds to gain a foothold upon it. But hardly had he done so, when Waubesa, who had gained the point at the same time, rushed toward him. He grasped no weapon, counting upon his strength to overmatch Amboy.

This movement was executed so quickly that Henry had not the time to draw his knife ere he felt himself in the grasp of the Ojibwah.

But from the first moment that the dusky villain laid his hands upon his young antagonist, he felt that he had either miscalculated upon his own strength, or else that of the other. He received a blow in the pit of the stomach, which at once "knocked him out of time," and sent him sprawling to the grass.

The red-skin finally gained his feet again; and just in time to ward off a blow from the young man's clubbed rifle.

Catching Amboy around the waist, the savage attempted to force him over backwards, which, after some exertion, he succeeded in doing. Then, in return, Amboy caught the Ojibwah by his ankles, and tripped him up.

Angered at this, and finding that he had got his match, Waubesa made a movement as if to grasp his hatchet; but, suddenly, his determination was again changed. He resolved to make one more attempt, and if he failed, to bring his weapon into play then.

With another spring on the part of each, the antagonists were again in each other's grasp. Over and over they rolled among the bushes, each striving to gain the advantage. That advantage was at length won by the Ojibwah, and by grasping his antagonist by the throat. The young man could feel the sinewy fingers fasten to him like a vise, and he felt the horrible sensation caused by being choked. He indeed struggled manfully, but there was no escape. Tighter and tighter the grasp seemed to become as each second passed away, until his brain reeled, and he could struggle no longer.

CHAPTER XV

A BUNGLER'S RUSE.

WHEN Henry awoke again to consciousness, he was unable to move his arms. They had been bound to his sides by tethers of buck-skin; but his limbs were still free. He looked about him, in search of the Ojibwah—his captor. The de-

mon was but a few paces distant, calmly smoking his long-stemmed pipe.

No sooner did the red-skin perceive that his captive had opened his eyes, than he rose to his feet, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and motioned the young man to rise.

The motion was understood, and at once obeyed. Amboy knew himself to be in the demon's power, and he resolved not to awaken the ire of his captor by any act of stubbornness on his part.

Next, motioning the young man to follow him, Waubesa quit the point, making his way to the forest.

Through this the two proceeded for a mile and a half or thereabouts, and in a very circuitous manner, as if the Indian wished to avoid certain localities, where it might not have been safe for him to have been seen.

Contrary to what might be supposed, the heart of the captive was not in a desponding state. He had not failed to notice that his captor had not used any weapons, with which he was well supplied; and from this fact Amboy inferred that the Ojibwah intended him no more harm than to keep him prisoner.

"I suspect his design is," concluded the young man, "to keep me as a hostage, or to demand a ransom for my release."

Alas! he had sadly mistaken the motive of the savage.

The two arrived at the bank of the river, at a spot where there overhung the Minnesota a high bank, beneath which one could be perceived only from the river, for the summit projected out further by many feet than the base.

Guiding his captive beneath the overhanging bank, a fissure in the rock became visible. This fissure was just wide enough to admit the body of a man; and, with a not to be mistaken gesture from his captor, Amboy entered it. The Ojibwah followed him.

Then, taking from his girdle a buck-skin thong, he lound together the young man's limbs. This done, the demon gave vent to a grunt of satisfaction, and squeezed himself out of the cleft. Looking about him, his eye fell upon a large-sized stone, but not too heavy for him to displace it, and put it against the opening of the cleft. Amboy was alone.

This proceeding on the part of Waubesa, but confirmed the opinion his prisoner had formed—that he was intended to be kept as a captive, only. But, even this was a fate he had no desire to taste; so, seating himself on the rocky bottom of his prison, he made several attempts to withdraw his hands from the loops which fastened them together. They had been drawn tight, and his efforts failed to accomplish his purpose.

Therefore, despairing of being able to free himself in this manner, he was about to raise his voice, in hopes that some one or other might hear him, when it occurred to him that his captor, of all others, was the most likely to hear him. This, he knew, would raise the red-skin's anger; and so the idea was given up, he resolving wisely to allow things to, for a time at least, take their own course. Noon came, and so did sunset; but the Ojibwah was yet absent. Slowly the light gave way to darkness, until the young man could see the confines of his prison no longer.

It was then that the sound of footsteps fell upon his ear, and presently the stone was removed from its position at the mouth of the cleft.

Entering, Waubesa bade the young man arise. The savage then severed the thong that bound the prisoner's ankles, and a moment later, Amboy found himself once more in the open air.

Keeping along the bank of the river for some distance, the two reached a copse of willows, from which the Ojibwah drew forth a canoe. Sliding one end of it into the water, he bade the young man enter.

The Indian next entered himself, and, with a powerful sweep of his paddle, sent the craft far out from the bank, directing his course to the opposite side of the river.

Beneath the tremendous paddle-strokes of the Ojibwah, the canoe seemed to skim the water like a bird; and ten minutes from the time of starting, the bow of the craft touched the opposite bank, where the two at once debarked.

Then, after Waubesa had once more secreted his canoe, he led his prisoner forward, but this time, not far. The river was only a few rods distant from where they halted, and over the bushes the prisoner could see the sheen of the water be-

neath the rays of the moon, which was just rising above the horizon.

If the young man had not watched the proceedings of his captor with any great amount of interest before, he did so now; and, for the first time, his heart began to fail him at what he saw. The intentions of the Ojibwah were disguised no longer, and he showed his nature in all its hideousness.

Leading his captive to a tree, the demon bound him tightly to it. He then retired for a short distance, gathering, as he proceeded, branch after branch, until the entire load was thrown at the prisoner's feet.

"Oh, God! oh, God!" ejaculated Amboy. "I know his meaning now. *He is going to burn me alive!*"

The demon heard and understood the words, and an unconcealed smile crossed his devilish features.

"Oh! where is Beyit or Kegonsa?" murmured the young man. "Would to God they knew where I am!"

"Ugh! the pale face has friends, but let them help him if they can."

"Red-man, what harm have I done you?" appealed the captive, in a despairing tone.

"Waubesah hates all pale-faces, as they hate him," was the answer.

"Then I have nothing to hope for. Do as you will."

During this, the savage had collected a small pile of leaves, which he now proceeded to ignite. Producing a match or two, he lit one, and touched it to the dry leaves. The flames flashed up and soon wrapped the branches at the feet of the captive in their folds.

But, before Amboy had time to feel their pangs—before he even felt the heat of the flames, the crack of a rifle sounded, and a man immediately afterward bounded into view. He reached the fire, and a few kicks scattered the burning brands in every direction.

Delaying not a moment longer, the Ojibwah turned and disappeared among the bushes. Amboy was saved. Turning his attention toward the young man, he whose timely aid had seemingly delivered the prisoner from the most horrible of deaths, severed the thongs which bound him, with a knife.

"Allow me, sir," he said, to Amboy, when this was done, "to congratulate you on your escape. It was fortunate that I did not arrive a few minutes later."

Amboy looked at him. He was a man of medium size and stature, garbed in the costume of a hunter, but whose full face was almost concealed by a heavy black beard and whiskers.

"Allow me to extend to you my deepest gratitude," replied Amboy, when his scrutiny was concluded. "The old adage says, 'A friend in need is a friend indeed;' and I have found it to be so."

The stranger laughed lightly.

"Come," he said, "allow me to conduct you to my retreat, for these woods are not safe at night. Dangers beset the traveler at almost every step. I tell you this, because I perceive you to be a stranger, and unarmed."

If Kyd—for he, the deliverer of Amboy, it was—supposed that the young man failed to penetrate through his disguise, he was mistaken. Furthermore, Henry was sharp enough to discover that the whole of the performance he had just passed through was a farce, gotten up between Kyd and the Ojibwah for the accomplishment of some purpose. But what that purpose was, he had yet to discover. Knowing that, so long as he did not seem to recognize the villain, he would be in no positive danger, the young man determined upon accepting the extended offer.

Making known his decision, he followed the fellow with the greatest seeming willingness.

A walk of a mile brought the two to the glen, and Amboy saw before him the stream which has already been described. He was struck by its awful wildness, and perceived that the stories he had heard of it had not been overdrawn.

First receiving a few directions from his companion, Henry stepped into the stream. But for the caution he had received he would have been swept off his feet, for the current was swifter than a mill-race. However, he managed to maintain his perpendicularity, and, shortly, the two reached the rock. Imitating Kyd by climbing up this, Amboy next followed him down into the cavern, inwardly wondering at the strange abode his companion had chosen.

After some little time had passed, Kyd used his best en-

deavors to draw the young man into conversation. He succeeded.

"Yes," he said, when they had conversed for some time, "Arfort is a bad man. He murdered a Frenchman, some years ago, in hopes of obtaining his money. But perhaps you have heard of it?"

Amboy replied in the negative.

"The Frenchman," continued Kyd, "left a paper, written on in cypher, which Arfort has got possession of. Did he ever show it to you?"

"He did show me such a paper; but it got lost."

"Ha! Did he ever find it again?"

"I left his cabin the very day it was missed."

On hearing the answer, Kyd was, for a time, silent. Then resolving not to betray his purpose by questioning the young man any further that night, he turned the conversation into another channel.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BESIEGED POST.

On the following morning, the settlers of Montville were highly elated over one of the most pleasant of circumstances which serve to relieve the monotony of a western life—the arrival of a wagon-train. But, toward the close of the afternoon, their feelings fell in a corresponding degree.

Intelligence was brought in that, before morning, they might expect another arrival, but not, this time, from friends.

Warned by Bevit and Kegonsa, the settlers were aware of the intended incursion of the Sioux; and these savages, they now learned, were encamped on the prairie, not ten miles away. They numbered at least two hundred, and only awaited the coming of night to be on the move.

From the first moment the settlers learned that the Sioux were bent upon their destruction, preparations had been commenced for their defense. A few of the cabins had been erected in close proximity to the fort. These, if left as they

were, the Indians could fire, and the heat would be likely to ignite the block-house as well. Accordingly, they were torn down, and the logs piled up inside of the stockade, which served to materially increase its strength.

The precautions of the pioneers extended further than this. No tyros in border warfare, they knew it to be the inviolable custom of the Indians to endeavor to fire the buildings, and this by lighted arrows.

Therefore, as soon as sundown had come, bucketful after bucketful of water was brought from the river, and poured over the shingles and palisades until they were completely saturated. This was a wise precaution; and had the plan been oftener followed, fewer massacres of those who relied upon their forts for protection would have had to be recorded by the historian of border warfare.

Soon after sundown, Jasper Arfort and his daughter arrived.

Did Arfort remember his promise to Kyd? He did. Did he intend to keep it? No.

The pioneers and their families were to have the fort to themselves. As for the trappers, they preferred, as they expressed it, "to fetch the red-skins from thar moccasins from the kiver o' the woods."

Darkness came. Slowly the hours went by until it was nearly midnight. Then, for the first time, the sentry at his post became aware that dark forms were moving over the clearing, and advancing toward the fort. Forward they came, with stealthy tread, led on by a fiend more terrible than all the rest—Waubesah, the Ojibwah.

They reached the stockade. They halted, an exclamation of surprise escaping their lips. The gate was closed, and the Ojibwah had told them it would be open to them. What did it mean?

Inside the stockade, too, forms were on the alert; and with one simultaneous crack, a score of rifles belched forth their contents, overwhelming the savages with consternation.

Maddened, those of the Sioux who had escaped the deadly fire retreated. Their companions, who had, up to this, kept themselves concealed in the woods, now knew well that their plan had been discovered, and by discovery defeated. With wild whoops and yells they rushed into the clearing.

Then followed an interval of silence.

Well did the settlers know the import of this. Soon, a crackling noise reached their ears, and the flames flashed up from a score of cabins, making the clearing seem as light as day. Nor was this all. Under the glare the demons were seen to be stalking about, and dragging forth from the burning structures what had been left behind by the settlers in their hurry.

The wagons of the newly arrived settlers had been drawn up in a circle on the further end of the clearing; and it was not long before the eyes of the Indians became fixed upon these. A crowd of the dusky warriors ran toward them. Their covers were ripped off in a trice, and the red robbers soon engaged in the work of pillaging the wagons of their contents, which, unfortunately, had been forgotten to be removed.

From the parapet and the loop-holes of the block-house, the owners witnessed the sight—the robbery of their all. Wives and children clung to their husbands and fathers, beseeching them with piteous cries to save some loved object which they had brought from their former home, but which it would be impossible to do. Truly it was a distressing spectacle.

The work of pillage was not of long duration. The wagons were fired, and then the attention of the demons was once more directed toward the fort. Dozens of the warriors were soon to be seen lighting their arrows at one of the fires, and volley after volley of the missiles were shot upon the parapet of the fort. But the wet wood refused to ignite, and—the red-skins saw that all their exertions to drive forth the settlers in this manner were unavailing.

They resolved, but only after a considerable time had been spent in deliberation, to carry the fort by assault.

Their plans were formed, and about to be put into immediate execution, when a volley from the cover of the woods caused them to halt. Each pierced by a bullet, several of the Sioux fell to the ground.

Great as was their number, this, for a moment, staggered them, for an attack from the woods was any thing but expected.

But high above the noise and confusion which followed, sounded the voice of their chief, and, obedient to the order, a hundred of the warriors plunged into the wood. Their intention was, of course, to drive the trappers from their position.

Anticipating this on the part of their enemies, the trappers had changed their base the moment after they had discharged their pieces.

Enraged at their disappointment, the savages returned to the clearing. Their assault was delayed no longer. With their dreadful war-cry pealing from their lips, a hundred and fifty rushed in a body toward the stockade.

From their position, the trappers watched the proceedings with eagerness. They saw that, as the Indians neared the stockade, they were met with a galling fire, and, an instant later, one from the parapet. The shots did fearful execution, but they were insufficient to check the infuriated demons.

Reaching the palisades, the Sioux attempted to displace them, in order to make an opening sufficiently large to admit the passage of their bodies to the interior of the stockade. "Wagh!" said one of the trappers, as he saw this. "Them air posts are strong, but, durn me! ef I believe they kin stand the blows the reds air givin' them."

"Boyees," said Bevit, "a few bullets among 'em might help to scatter the varmints."

"Too far from hyur, hoss."

"Sartin? Thur's the river. We mout approach nearer to 'em in that direction. Back o' the bank we could defend ourselves ag'in' ten times our number o' varmints like Sioux, who can't fight worth a plug o' baccy off hossback."

The plan was adopted. Skirting around the edge of the clearing, but keeping well without the glare of the light, the trappers reached the bank of the river.

Just at this juncture, weakened by the blows of a hundred hatchets the Sioux wielded, the palisades gave way; and, with a yell of exultation, the demons rushed into the stockade.

Their next rush was then made at the fort. But the door had been closed, and well barricaded; it refused to give way. But as they had done to the palisades, the Sioux attacked the door with their hatchets.

One of the savages, especially, distinguishable from the rest by his superior height and more attractive garb, was the most formidable of the lot. He possessed a strong arm, and every blow he dealt told.

"Wagh!" said Bevit, "that red-skin air the son of thar chief, Yellow Thunder. The old skunk hisself hesn't j'ined in the fight. Yonder he is, a-palaverin' with that scar-faced skunk o' an Ojibwah."

"It's sartin," said another, "thet if them air red-skins airn't scattered in less nor ten minutes, they'll be inside o' the fort."

Making no audible reply, Bevit brought his rifle to his shoulder. An instant later the crack of the weapon sounded, and the son of the chief dropped to the ground.

One after another in quick succession, the rest of the trappers fired, until a ghastly pile of dusky bodies lay near the block-house door.

But terrible to the besiegers as this must have been, they kept on. As for those within the fort, they were, owing to the close proximity of the savages to the building, unable to use their arms.

But the constant fire kept up by the brave trappers at last began to be effectual; and the savages, suddenly turning, ran in a crowd to the opposite side of the clearing. They could be seen clustering around their chief, loudly talking and gesticulating. Ever and anon, one would whip out his hatchet, and flourish the glittering weapon menacingly at the fort.

This scene lasted for some time. Then, by their actions, it became evident that some other expedient was to be tried.

For some reason or other, one or two of the wagons on the clearing had not been set fire to; and it was now toward these that the demons ran.

"What kin the reds be after now?" asked one of the men.

He received no answer. His companions were no wiser on the subject than himself.

Reaching the wagons, a number of the Sioux grasped hold of the tongues of each, and drew them up to as many of the burning cabins. A number of burning logs were piled onto

the vehicles, and then, with loud cries of exultation, the demons dragged them close to the fort, despite the storm of bullets that greeted their approach.

"Comrades," said Bevit, "the fort air doomed. It kin stand blazing arrows, but it won't stand that."

The settlers, too, knew this, and their exclamations of alarm could be heard plainly across the clearing.

But, resolving to make an attempt to frustrate this design, a few of the braver of the besieged appeared upon the parapet of the fort, each bearing a bucketful of water. The liquid was hurled over the sides of the building upon the burning wagons below; but before the brave pioneers had time to retrace their steps, the bodies of half of them became transfixed by a score of arrows.

Unquenched, the flames licked the dry logs, and these were rapidly commencing to ignite. The besiegers had ceased their devilish yells, and stood in groups here and there to watch the progress of their work.

But hark! the silence is suddenly broken by the united yells from a hundred throats. With mingled looks of surprise and fear, the Sioux gaze at each other, and low exclamations from them can be heard.

Again the cry is heard, and louder than before. The Sioux now know its meaning well. *It is the war-cry of their enemies, the Ojibwahs!*

Their attention is occupied by those within the fort, no longer. They now think only of their own safety; and, with hurried movement, they can be seen stalking over the clearing.

A few moments more elapsed. Then, with a repetition of the battle-cry, the forms of Ojibwahs are seen debouching from the woods on every side.

The dusky foes meet. It is, indeed, "Greek against Greek."

The barbed arrow, the reeking scalping-knife, the glittering tomahawk are brought into play, mingled with yells and whoops, making a scene terrible beyond words. But the clumsy movements of the prairie Indians, contrasted with their agile foes, tell against them, and the contest is ended by the retreat of the Sioux to the forest. They are pursued, and

ever and anon a yell or screech announces that the work of death is still kept up.

In the meantime, the settlers have torn down the barricades from the door, and, rushing forth, draw the burning wagons from their dangerous position. It is not too soon. Five minutes longer would have seen the fort wrapped in flames.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BESIEGED YANKEE.

BOTH Kit and Amboy beheld the light of the burning settlement, and the former soon set forth to learn the result of the Sioux attack, leaving Amboy behind. Amboy by cleverly feigning great fright over the presence of the Sioux completely deceived the renegade, who said to himself, as he started off—"He'll keep close enough, I'll warrant." But hardly had Kyd disappeared than the young man followed, and reaching the river after a long exploration of its banks for a canoe at length found one in which he crossed the stream, heading for Arfort's cabin, filled with wild fears for the safety of Maud Arfort. A call from the bank arrested him, just as he was about to land. Steve Bevit and the force from the settlement were there, in pursuit of the retreating Sioux. Amboy was then informed of all that had happened and eagerly joined in the human hunt. The Sioux really were *corraled* in the "Dead Wood" a section of the forest which from some unexplained cause was utterly dead and the ground was thickly strewn with the dry debris, affording excellent cover for a defense. Through Kegonsa's activity the friendly Ojibwah had made an entire "surround" of this wood and when Amboy arrived on the scene the movement against the enemy was ready. *The game was to be roasted alive by firing the dead forest!*

To detail this act is unnecessary. The fires were kindled to the windward, and, aided by the wind swept into the dead wood with rapidity and soon the lurking place of the Sioux

was a sea of flame. An awful moment came. The Sioux were driven to dash out of the vortex of fire, but everywhere were confronted by the deadly rifle or arrow and one by one they miserably perished, helpless even to strike back at their avengers. It was an awful retribution.

But how many had perished? Were Waubesa and Yellow Thunder in that cauldron of fire? were the questions asked among the trappers, but none could answer. There were a few of the Sioux at the last moment, burst out on one side and gained cover, and these the Ojibwahs set out to pursue and hunt down, while the whites returned exulting to the settlement. Only Bevit, Kegonsa and Amboy headed for Arfort's cabin to see what was its condition.

By this time, it was nearly morning, wanting but half an hour to the rising of the sun.

On arriving within sight of Arfort's cabin, they were brought to a sudden standstill by a sight, to two of them, at least, wholly unexpected. In the center of the clearing upon which the cabin had been built stood a number of red-skins. With a single exception, these were Sioux. That single exception was Waubesa the Ojibwah! Standing near him was the chief, Yellow Thunder!

The latter savage, despite his high-sounding title, was a warrior of small size and stature. He was past sixty years of age, but he yet displayed the most wonderful activity and was as supple as most warriors at forty.

Altogether, the red-skins on the clearing numbered eleven. A single glance was sufficient to inform the trapper, Amboy and Kegonsa what the motive of the savages was. The door of the cabin had been closed, and near it stood three of the fiends who, with hatchets drawn, were endeavoring to batter it down. The door, formed of oaken plank, for some time resisted the terrible blows of the hatchets, but at length an aperture was made in it. A whoop of triumph went up, but before it had time to die away, the muzzle of a rifle was protruded through the opening, quickly followed by the whip-like crack and one of the savages fell instantly.

But the red-skins kept on. Supposing Maud Arfort to be within the cabin, Amboy was trembling for her safety. The work of the savages was being pushed successfully, and it

was probable that, in a few seconds longer, their bows would open the aperture sufficiently wide to admit their bodies.

Only one thing was to be done. The three men must gain the inside of the cabin. This was of course impossible under ordinary circumstances, but now young Amboy made a welcome announcement. The out-lying smoke-house—a stout structure of logs—was connected with the cabin by a covered passage, made by Arfort for emergencies. This information opened the way for the proposed relief of the poor fellows within the cabin; and, in a few moments, the three men made a dash for the smoke-house, and, entering safely, secured the door, then started for the cabin.

The defender was found to be Rollo, who was a delighted man to receive aid at that desperate moment.

Steve's quick eye detected a suspicious movement among the savages. The dash for the smoke-house had been observed by the wary Waubesa, and his investigations showed what had happened.

To see this was to follow it up, and Steve, watching carefully, saw several of the Sioux force the smoke house door and enter it.

"The varmints 'll get inside o' the passage next, I'll bet a plug o' baccy," was Steve's natural conclusion.

The words proved true. Five or six of the Sioux entered the passage, and commenced to grope their way along it, being ignorant, of course, as to where it would end.

Leaving Rollo to watch the cabin, Bevit, Kegonsa and Amboy descended to the cellar. Here they took up their position close to the debouchure of the passage with drawn hatchets—the best weapons which could have been selected for such a position.

Several minutes elapsed without the least sound being heard, and then could be detected the soft tread of a moccasined foot, followed by the foremost of the Sioux stepping into the cellar. Keeping perfectly motionless, the trio were not seen until four of the red-skins had shown themselves. The savage who made the discovery was the third who had entered; but, before he had time to give utterance to the ejaculation that rose to his lips, the hatchet of Kegonsa split his skull in twain.

Amboy and Bevit, too, were equally on the alert, and two more of the red-skins soon followed in the wake of their companion. Two more now remained. One who had just protruded his head into the cellar when the first blow was struck, was grasped by Kegonsa, and the contest ended by the half-blood's plunging his knife into the breast of the Sioux.

The remaining one was a warrior greatly superior in size to his companions, and who, surprised as he had been, resolved to die as a warrior should. The trapper was standing nearest to him, and, with a quick spring, the Sioux was upon him.

The trapper essayed to use his hatchet, but in vain. The arms of his wiry antagonist pinned him to his sides. The trapper's weapon slipped from his grasp; just at the same instant Kegonsa placed himself at the Sioux' back. The latter had dropped his hatchet to the floor, and now grasped in its stead his knife. But, before the blow came, the canning Sioux suddenly released his right arm, and brought it sweeping backward. The blow fell upon Kegonsa's temple, and, with a low moan, the half-blood sunk to the ground, insensible. Then, with a terrible effort, the trapper was flung to the further end of the cellar.

For a moment, it seemed as if the savage was master of the situation.

His eye next fell upon Amboy. With an exclamation of rage, he drew forth his tomahawk. Young Amboy, as well, grasped a hatchet, but knowing full well how much the Sioux was at home, and himself a mere tyro, with such a weapon, he dropped it to the ground and drew forth a pistol he had borrowed from Bevit.

He had scarcely time to cock and level the pistol, when he beheld the Sioux rushing toward him. It was a fearful situation, but Amboy never felt his hand steadier in all his life. He pressed the trigger, the report came, and the huge warrior fell full length upon the floor. A stream of blood oozed from his breast; not a muscle moved. He was dead.

By this time, Kegonsa had recovered from the effects of the blow dealt him by the Sioux, and the two ascended to the room where was Rollo, actively engaged in keeping a sharp look-out for the rest of the savages, who were still assembled near the smoke-house.

"Wal," said Bevit, as his eye again fell upon these, "thur's now only two o' the varmints left. It's o' no use waitin' for the varmints to attack us ag'in. I, for one, don't purpose to stay hyur all day."

"Gander-legs—" addressing Rollo, "jest whip that air six-shooter o' yourn out o' yer belt, an' band it over. I kin tackle the hull grist at onc't, an' may I be 'tarnally jugguzzled ef I don't clur the clearin' o' the skunks in less nor five minutes. My dander's riz, it is. I've sot traps in every stream aroun' hyur, and in a good stretch o' Britisher Americer for nigh onto forty yeern, an' jugguzzle me ef ever an Injin sarved me as that one did jest now. Wagh!"

Rollo handed the desired weapon to the irate trapper, who, muttering to himself disappeared down the cellar.

A few moments elapsed, and then the trapper was seen to emerge from the passage inside the smoke-house. So quick and unexpected to the savages was his appearance, that it was not until one of the chambers of the revolver had been emptied, and one of the red-skins dropped dead, that the remainder became aware of their danger.

The eye of the trapper became fixed upon the demon, Waubesa. The savage saw this, and fain would he have avoided his danger. But it was too late. The second crack came, and the Ojibwah, wounded, fell to the ground. The bullet struck him in his right shoulder, immediately below the clavicle.

Though elated at this, Bevit did not stop. In a twinkling he set the third chamber in position, and the discharge sent the noted Yellow Thunder to his last account. His two warriors saw this, and, with a yell of terror, they turned, and disappeared in the forest.

The trapper was now joined by those he had left within the cabin, and it was but the work of a few moments to bind the wounded Ojibwah, and thus make him a prisoner. Thus ended the last raid of the Sioux upon the settlement of Montville.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DOOM OF A NIGHT.

AMBOY, Kegonsa and the trapper immediately proceeded with their prisoner toward the settlement. As for Rollo, he did not accompany them. The brave fellow preferred remaining at the cabin.

On reaching the settlement the news that the dreaded Waubesa was wounded and a prisoner, flashed through it like wildfire. Men, women and children crowded round the savage, to have a fair look at him who had ever been a source of dread to them from the first time they had heard his name.

Arfort, more, perhaps, than any of the settlers put together, felt gratified over the Ojibwah's capture. The ravine of the Trail of Death had now lost its horror. He was at liberty to visit it when he pleased, and without fear of being molested.

Toward the close of the day, the prisoner was brought forth, and put upon his trial—if by such a name the proceedings could be called. A few of the settlers, led by Arfort, were for putting the prisoner to death, and at once—that very night. The majority agreed to the former proposition, but not to the latter. It was better, they thought, to keep the fiend until the morrow—until daylight, when his death struggles could be exultingly witnessed. The debate was long and earnest on both sides, but the majority gained their point.

It was decided, then, that Waubesa should be hung at sunrise. Arfort would have given much to have had the sentence executed at once, but his efforts were in vain. His opponents were as firm in one direction as he was in another.

Leaving Maud at the settlement, Jasper Arfort, some time after nightfall, returned to his cabin. He did not remain here long, for bidding Rollo accompany him, he struck off through the woods. The direction pursued was that taken by Maud on the morning she had started out in hopes of meeting Amboy.

He reached the two maples, and then struck off through the thicket of hickories, followed closely by Rollo. Presently he arrived at a path which, though he had never looked upon it before, he knew to be the *Trail of Death*. The moon was at her full, high in the heavens, and he was able to see his way without difficulty.

He arrived at the debouchure of the ravine. Here, turning suddenly, he requested Rollo to wait until he returned.

Entering the ravine, and it was not without a shudder that he did so, Arfort proceeded for some distance forward, when, in the moonlight, his eye fell upon a sight that caused him to stop and throw up his hands in horror. There, as if staring him in the face, he beheld the form of a human skeleton—blanched, and as perfect as if fresh from the hands of an experienced anatomist.

Had Arfort been alone, he would have turned back; but, knowing that Rollo was close at hand, he overcame the dread he felt, and kept on.

Not knowing the exact location of the cabin of the Frenchman, or, rather, the ruins of it, Arfort kept a continual lookout on every side, and after considerable search, his pains were rewarded by his suddenly and unexpectedly coming upon the object of his visit to that dread locality.

The Frenchman had built his cabin under the shade of a large-sized maple, which stood in the very center of the ravine. The tree was yet standing, and appeared to be, sentinel-like, guarding the ruins at its base. Logs had fallen across each other in strange confusion. The dry shingles were scattered here and there over the ground, giving the spot an aspect which, to Arfort's eye, was any thing but pleasant.

After some searching, Arfort discovered an opening sufficiently wide to admit his crawling in beneath the logs. This he at once resolved to take advantage of; and, after dropping on his hands and knees, and casting a look about the ravine, to assure himself that no human eye was following his movements, he crawled in beneath the logs. There was nothing to stay his progress, and he soon had the satisfaction of finding himself on the very spot he had so long wished to gain.

There was a strange glitter in his eye, a nervous trembling of his muscles, as he drew a hatchet from beneath his close-fitting coat, and struck the sharp blade into the ground.

"The money is buried here," he muttered. "I feel it. But I may have to dig a week before I find it. But no matter for that. That red-skinned cut-throat will never bother me more. Ha! ha! the rising of to-morrow's sun will see him launched on his long journey. Thanks to young Amboy for this. Noble fellow! He loves Maud—she loves him, madly. She shall have him."

The last word had not fallen from Jasper Arfort's lips, when he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder. Horror-struck, he turned. It was dark, but he could see fastened upon him a pair of blazing eyes.

"Do you know me?" the owner of the orbs asked, after the lapse of a few seconds.

"I do," answered Arfort.

"My name?"

"You are Kyd."

"Right, Jasper Arfort. You thought you had foiled me, did you? Jasper Arfort has made many mistakes in his lifetime, but never a greater one than to-night. I saw you leave the fort; I tracked you to your cabin; I followed you from thence here; I heard your words. Come outside. Another surprise awaits you."

Arfort felt the withdrawal of the eyes from his own, and heard the speaker making his way out to the open air. He followed. What else could he do?

As Kyd had said, Arfort, on finding himself from beneath the ruins of the cabin, did meet with another surprise—a surprise far more terrible than the former. There, his horrid figure looming up in the moonlight, stood the one whom Arfort had imagined to be a doomed prisoner—the dreadful Waubesa. The Ojibwah stood eying Arfort with an expression so terrible that he was like to swoon beneath it. To depict his feelings is impossible.

"The pale-face thought that Waubesa was to die," the savage said at length. "But no. His is a body that knows no captivity. When the Great Spirit, who rules the sky, wills it, then shall Waubesa die—but not before that. He

has felt the pangs of fire, and the pale-face has made redder than his skin his back with cruel whips, but he yet lives, lives in spite of all. Will Arfort, when another moon shall ride above the tree-tops, be able to say this? Waubesa thinks not. He has entered the ravine which is approached by the Trail of Death. He must die!"

The words fell upon the ears of Arfort like a knell. *He was to die!* How terrible—terrible was the thought. He would have given his all, the money he hoped to have brought to light, any thing he possessed, to have been within his cabin at that moment.

"Fool! fool!" he thought, "not to have waited until to-morrow!"

But it was too late to indulge in thoughts like these. He had been in haste to secure what but awaited the hand to bring it to light; he had been detected, and whatever the consequences were, he must take them.

"Jasper Arfort," said Kyd, when the Ojibwah had finished, "I heard the words that fell from your lips, a few minutes ago, when you thought there was no one near to hear you. You said that Amboy loved your daughter Maud, and further, that she loved him. Did I hear aright?"

"I did say that," answered Arfort. "It is the truth."

"Has she told you so?"

"She told me so, last night. Why do you ask?"

"Because she is my promised wife."

Arfort was silent. Kyd continued:

"She is my promised wife. Have you forgotten that promise?"

"No, but deplore it."

"It does not matter. I shall have her. I am not a man to be easily balked. I love Maud Arfort, and this very night I shall have her. Jasper Arfort, do you desire to live, or do you prefer to die? Your answer, and at once."

"To die? No, I am not fit for that. Give me my freedom, and any thing I possess is yours."

"Spoken like a man. At the entrance to this ravine stands your sentinel. Bid him go to the settlement and bring your daughter, and you are a free man."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor; I will not lift a hand against you."

Raising his voice to its highest pitch, Arfort called Rollo. He was answered.

"Go to the settlement," Arfort yelled, "and bring Maud. Tell her, if she wishes to save my life, to come without delay."

"Never fear," Rollo answered, from his position. "I will be back soon, bringing Miss Maud with me."

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked Arfort, of Kyd.

"Quite. As for Waubesa, you must settle matters with him as best you can."

Arfort started.

"Have you no influence over him?" he asked.

"None."

The word sounded to Arfort like his knell. He was left to the mercy of the Ojibwah. He had nothing to hope for, and he knew it.

"Pale-face," said the Indian, "what do you wish for?"

"My life," was Arfort's answer.

"Do you remember, when the sun last set, that your pale-face friends dragged Waubesa out to hold a council over him? Who was it that wished him to die the soonest?"

Arfort made no reply, and the savage continued:

"I will answer for you. It was yourself—Arfort. See! This is my revenge."

There was a sudden movement on the part of the Indian, a shriek from Arfort, who, the next instant, sunk to the ground, his skull cleft in twain by the blow of his enemy's tomahawk.

Wiping the bloody instrument of death on the grass, the Indian returned it to his belt.

"Thus dies," he said, to Kyd, "Waubesa's greatest enemy."

CHAPTER XIX

THE RAVINE GIVES UP ITS MYSTERY.

IMMEDIATELY upon hearing Arfort's order, the faithful Rollo started out for the settlement, at which he arrived, being a quick walker, in a short time.

He immediately proceeded toward the fort, arriving near the stockade of which, he was challenged by the sentry at the gate.

"Oh!" said the latter, as he recognized the Yankee. "It's yew, be it? Wal, what's in the wind now, boyee?"

"Can't say, adzactly. Miss Maud inside?"

"Who d'ye mean—Arfort's darter?"

"Yes."

"Sartin, she be. What mou't ye want with her, boyee, at this time o' the night?"

"Arfort wants her, an' as quick as she kin come, too."

"Wagh! thur's a somethin' up, I'spect. Howsomedever, it's none o' my bizness, so I'll call the gal. Jest keep yer eyes peeled until I come back, will yer?"

The trapper, who was none other than our friend Bevit, immediately entered the fort, from which, in a short time, he returned, accompanied by Maud Arfort.

"Did father send for me?" she asked of Rollo.

"Yas, Miss Arfort. He told me to tell you to come at once, if you wished to save his life."

"What could he mean?" she asked, frightened at the words. "Was he alone Rollo?"

"Wal, yaas. At least, I didn't see any one else."

"Quick, then! Let us hurry to the cabin."

"To the cabin! Lor bless yew, he ain't thur."

"Where, then, is he?"

"At the ravine, Miss—the ravine whar Waubesaah lives."

Maud Arfort, as this was said, turned white as a sheet.

"Then," she said, in a low tone, "my father is a doomed man. It is said that whoever enters that ravine is fated to

never quit it alive. Again, Rollo, are you *certain* that he was alone?"

"Wal, yaas. I warn't with him, ye see. He left me to keep guard at the entrance o' the ravine. But come to think, though, I did hear the sound o' voices. P'rhaps it war Waubesah hisself as war talkin' to yer father."

"Waubesah! No, no. He is a prisoner. But, oh, God *he may have escaped.*"

It needed no further incentive to cause Bevit to hastily enter the fort, and make his way to the cellar. Entering this, he looked about him. A tallow candle lit up the place with a soft light, but it was quite sufficient to show the trapper that the savage he sought was no longer there. No, he had made good his escape. With a shout which rung through the fort, the trapper ascended the rude stairway to above-ground. In less than a dozen seconds, his shout was answered.

"What is up?"

"Quick!" Bevit answered. "The cussed Ojibwah has cut clur! Hurry up, durn ye!"

Exclamations were heard proceeding from the different apartments, and in five minutes, a dozen hunters and trappers were crowding into the stockade.

"Boyees," said Bevit, when all were present, "that red-skin has fooled us ag'in. More'n that, it's more'n likely that he hes gone to the ravine whar he lives, an' our frien' Arfort is in danger. He hes sent for his darter. I s'pect thar's some devilish game been hatched, an' depend on it, comrades, Waubesah an' that Kyd air at the bottom o' it. This devilish pair hev bin a-bevin' it thar own way long enough. The rest o' ye kin say what ye like, but as for me, I'm detarmined to hunt 'em down, an' settle thar business at onc't and for ever."

"Ye ain't alone, boyee. It war time months ago that the two war clur'd out. The mystery o' the ravine o' the Trail o' Death may be a deep one, but not so deep but what the death o' that branded red-skin may clur up. I'm in fur goin' to the ravine, an' at onc't."

And, with one accord, a dozen resolute, determined men announced their readiness to follow in the footsteps of their two companions who had just spoken.

"To the ravine, then" said Bevit, "an' God willin', before the sun shall rise, the mystery shall be a thing of the past, an' Waubesah the Ojibwah plugged through his black heart with a bullet."

Bidding Maud Arfort return to the fort, assured that her father should soon be clear of all danger, the band passed outside the stockade, and plunged into the forest, heading for the ravine.

Before this was reached, their plans were formed. Were the band to enter the ravine in a body, they might be detected by the wary Ojibwah, and Arfort would not live a moment longer. Therefore, before the ravine was quite reached, the band were to halt, and Rollo, alone, was to enter the abode of the Ojibwah, and inform Arfort that his daughter refused to accompany him further than the cabin. He was to make a good use of his eyes, and a yell from him would be the signal for the band to dash forward, and seize the Ojibwah before he had time to quit the ravine, which—so the trappers thought—could only be accomplished in one direction.

They followed along the Trail of Death until they arrived at a huge oak. As Bevit knew, this tree was not over a hundred yards from the debouchure of the ravine, and he accordingly gave the signal for the halt to be made.

"Now, Rollo, boyee," he said, to the Yankee, "keep cool. Ye've got a dangerous errand to do, an' it'll be a streak o' luck ef ye kin git the advantage o' the red-skin, who, ten ag'in' one, will keep his karkidge out o' sight. But the moment ye air sure he air 'ithin the ravine, gi' us the yell."

In spite of this, the heart of the brave Rollo was not one whit dismayed, and he started immediately on his errand. He entered the ravine, and, as he did so, he heard a slight rustling of the bushes to his right. But, supposing it to have been caused by some animal, he heeded it not, but kept along his course.

When, after having entered the ravine, he had proceeded for some fifty yards, a figure suddenly loomed up in the pathway. For a second or two, owing to the distance and the dim light of the waning moon, Rollo supposed it to be Arfort. A second look however, showed him his mistake. The

figure was neither that of Arfort nor the Ojibwah. It was Kyd—a man whom Rollo hated far more than he did Waubesa.

The two men approached each other—distrust and dislike on one side, curiosity on the other. When but a few feet from each other, both men halted, and stood looking into the other's face. Kyd was the first to break the silence.

"Did you deliver your master's message?"

"Sartin I did. What is Arfort?"

"Just behind me—only a short back. But where is—his daughter?"

"She wouldn't come any further than the cabin."

"Ha! Then she is there, is she?"

"It ain't at all onlikely that she be thar. Why?"

Instead of answering the question, Kyd gave vent to a dry, forced cough. Immediately Rollo became aware that some one was behind him, but before he had time to turn, he felt himself seized, and, powerful as he was, and being taken at a disadvantage, he was dragged to the ground, Kyd, too, a moment later, assisted at the work, and Rollo, in a very few moments, was a prisoner.

But he made not the least outcry, and it was fortunate for him that he did not.

"We will not harm him—at least, for the present," he heard Kyd remark to the Ojibwah in a low tone. "We may need his assistance yet. My bird is at her cabin. We have no time to spare, Waubesa. See! The moon is near to the horizon, and our work must be done before daylight arrives."

And, after assuring themselves that the thongs which bound their prisoner were perfectly secure, the two worthies quitted him.

Rollo waited, but not long. He waited until they could but have been a few yards from the debouchure of the ravine, and then, raising his voice to its highest pitch, he called to his companions that their time had come.

His signal was heard, and the trappers, in an instant, were dashing toward the ravine.

When the debouchure was gained, they saw looming up before them the figures of Kyd and the Ojibwah, petrified,

for an instant, at the unexpected sight. But it was only for an instant that they remained so, for, with an ejaculation from each, they turned, and disappeared from sight in the bushes. They were instantly followed, but without success.

For over an hour was the search kept up, but the two villains were not found. Both had escaped, and by a path known only to Waubesa.

But if they were not discovered, their search proved to be, to the trappers, any thing but a useless one in another direction.

Two or three of the hunters, had been beating the bushes in the interior of the ravine, when to their surprise, a faint voice at once attracted their attention. The hunters listened. The words they had before heard was repeated:

"Ici, amis. Je suis ici."

"What is it?" queried one of the hunters of another.

"Dunno," was the answer. "Durn me if I kin tell whar the noise comes from!"

Again was the cry repeated, and, this time, a little louder.

"Wagh!" said one of the hunters. "It's some one as the red-skin has shut up. S'arch, comrades, an' we'll find some-way to git to him."

The search soon ended by the discovery of a hole in the ground, in the midst of a copse of hazels. The aperture was sufficiently large to admit the body of a man; and one of the hunters, without more ado, disappeared in it. In a few seconds an exclamation was heard from the hunter:

"Bu'st my b'iler! This beats Injuns an' rattlesnakes all to blazes! Whugh! Geehosephat!"

The various exclamations to which the hunter gave vent had hardly died away, when he appeared above-ground. Then kneeling down close to the hole, he put his arm down as far as he could reach, saying:

"Be keerful now. Don't hurry. Your bones must be as brittle as dry stick, by this time."

Slowly drawing up his arm, the hunter at last brought to sight the head and shoulders of a man—an old, old man. A moment later, and he stood before the wondering crowd, the target of all their eyes.

It was a picture which those who looked upon it never forgot. The long, white hair, the deeply wrinkled, haggard face, the sunken eyes, added to a once large and powerful frame, but now bent and distorted with a long confinement in the place from which he had been rescued by the hunters, made those who looked upon him, used as they were to suffering, turn sick.

"Do you know me?" he asked, after some moments had passed, in broken English.

"No," said Bevit. "An' yet, your voice I've heern before, somewhar. How long have you been in thet air cussed place, mister?"

"I do not know. But it must have been for years. Some of you, perhaps, knew me long ago. I was called Jacques Pictoue."

Had a thunderbolt fallen, it could not have surprised them more than this announcement. Yes, they knew him to be the rich Frenchman who had, years ago, lived in the very ravine in which he now stood, and who was supposed to have been murdered.

No wonder, then, that unspeakable surprise sealed, for a time, the lips of all.

At last, however, the old man was led to, and seated on a log, while the hunters stood around him in a circle to hear the story of his imprisonment.

"Hyur, mister," said a young hunter, holding a flask of brandy up to the Frenchman's lips, "take a swig o' this. It'll gi'e ye more strength to wag yer tongue."

The kindness, rough as it was, was appreciated, and the Frenchman swallowed a large draft of the brandy. As the hunter had predicted, it seemed to arouse all his energies, and he was not long in commencing the history of his imprisonment.

"It is now years ago," he said, "since I first came to this place, and built my cabin here. How many years it is, I am not able to say. To me, it seems a hundred.

"One day, I was just seated at my dinner, when a soft tread on the threshold informed me that some one was behind me. I looked back, and I met the gaze of five Indians. They nodded—the usual Indian greeting—and entered my

cabin. They were hungry. I gave them plenty to eat. After that they rewarded me by tomahawking me, but not in such a manner that recovery was impossible.

"For many days, however, I lay at the point of death. But during that time, I was cared for by one who, if her face was red, had the heart of an angel. One day, feeling a little easier, I took a pen and ink, and wrote on it in cypher, bidding her, after I had given her the paper, keep it always. Poor Agramona! I never saw her after that day. When she next visited the ravine, she found I was gone. She thought me dead. But I was not.

"On the very night of the day that I had given the writing to Agramona, Waubesa, the Ojibwah, as he was called, at that time, visited my cabin. He seized me in his arms, and carried me to the place from which you have to-night delivered me. Here he has kept me ever since. Once in awhile, he would permit me, at night, always, to leave my prison, and breathe the fresh air for a time, he always keeping a good look-out on all my movements. As for food and drink, I had always plenty. His reason for keeping me was, he hoped to make me reveal the place where I had buried my gold. But I did not. Had I been sure of liberty, I would have done so at first. But I knew, full well that, its hiding-place once discovered by him, his tomahawk would end my life. So I lived on, hope keeping me alive. What year is this?"

"It is 18—" answered one of the hunters.

"Then I have been living in this manner for over eighteen years! *Mon Dieu!* it seemed ten times as long."

This, then, was the mystery of the Ravine of the Trail of Death.

By this time, the moon had sunk below the horizon, and the ravine was wrapped in gloom. The search, then, after Arfort, would have to be delayed until it was once more light.

Patiently the hunters waited. The eastern horizon at last began to be mantled with gray—the harbinger of the coming orb of day. The birds awoke from their sleep; and the sun, at last, burst in all its splendor into sight.

Ten minutes after, one of the hunters reached, in his search, the ruins of the cabin. Arfort lay on the ground before him—a horrible sight. He had bled profusely, and the ground

about him was red with the vital fluid. Life had long been extinct, for the body was cold and stiff.

A cry from the hunter who had discovered the body, brought his companions to the spot, and many and loud were the exclamations heard. Arfort, with all his faults, had been a popular man, and his fearful death was to be most terribly avenged.

CHAPTER XX.

TREACHERY'S REWARD.

WE will not attempt to describe the feelings of Maud Arfort when the ghastly remains of her father were brought to the settlement. It was, indeed, a terrible trial to her. That afternoon Arfort was buried. She kept within the fort all day. But at length, when evening came, half-distracted, she found her way to the bank of the river.

Seating herself, she gazed across the water. The scene was one well calculated to bring relief. The full moon was sailing above the trees, its light making the waters of the lovely Minnesota glisten like precious stones. All was calm—only the evening zephyr sighing in the tree-tops, and whippowil breaking the silence.

Suddenly, the sad thoughts the young girl was endaring were interrupted. She heard a step behind her. She would have glanced back, but before she could do so, Henry Amboy stood before her.

"Pardon me for disturbing you, Miss Arfort," the young man said; "but I have come to bid you adieu. I may not have another chance to do so."

She did not speak, but she felt the blood rush like a torrent to her head. He continued.

"When I am gone, will you sometimes think of me?"

It cost him an effort to say this.

"Think of you! Oh, yes. Often—often!"

"Then I shall be satisfied. I am going away. I shall

never see you again, but be not angry with me for saying this—that I love you, Maud—love you dearly.”

This unexpected annunciation caused the young girl to look up. That the words were said in earnest, her woman's keen perception saw at a glance.

“Mr. Amboy—Henry—do you indeed love me?”

“Love, Maud, is a word which but feebly expresses my feelings for you.”

“I believe you. Oh, Henry! Henry! I, too, love you. *I have loved you from the first hour I ever saw you.*”

Unmindful of the time, as it flew rapidly by, the lovers retained their places near the bank of the river. She, in her new joy, had forgotten her sorrow—she thought only of him at her side. His arm was around her, and as she gazed across the sparkling water, her head lay pillowed on Amboy's manly breast.

Suddenly a dark object, not a dozen feet out from the bank, was seen by the young man to be floating down the stream. It was a canoe. It contained one person—the Ojibwah. Amboy recognized the fiend on the instant! So, too, did Maud, and simultaneously the lovers sprung to their feet.

“Ugh!” grunted Waubesa, as he saw this. “Waubesa discovered. He must wait.” And dipping his paddle deep into the water, he sent the canoe rapidly down the stream—that is, as rapidly as it was possible to do with one arm.

For a moment, Henry knew not what to do. He was aware that Kegonsa, Bevit and a number of others had, some time since, started out in search of the red-skin, who had, in some manner unknown to him, succeeded in eluding them. The Ojibwah must not escape. The young man determined to follow the fiend, no matter how mad the attempt might look. He it must have been who had murdered the father of her whom Amboy loved, and that was enough in the eyes of the young man to thirst for the savage's life.

He imprinted a kiss on her forehead, and quitted her presence with sudden alacrity.

So unexpected was this, that it was some little time before she could recover herself sufficiently to act. She rushed with all her speed in the direction Amboy had taken, but was too late. Amboy had already embarked in a canoe.

Dipping his paddle deep into the water, Amboy caused the canoe to fly down the stream like an arrow. Some distance below, a point of land ran out into the river, and around this the Ojibwah had disappeared just as Amboy had embarked.

The young man's only fear was that the Indian might land. Were he to keep on the water, Henry knew he could overtake him.

The point was reached, and, like an arrow from a bow, his canoe shot past it. The canoe and Ojibwah were before him—the savage paddling leisurely toward the bank.

Hearing the dip of the young man's paddle, the red-skin turned, and a scowl shot across his ugly visage. In an instant, too, he comprehended the fact that he was in an ugly fix. His bow and quiver were at his back, but of what use were they to him? None at all. His wounded arm rendered them useless.

Immediately upon sighting the Indian, young Amboy withdrew his paddle from the water, and placed it on the bottom of his canoe. His next movement was to draw one of the revolvers now in his belt, and level it. The crack followed, and the Ojibwah gave vent to a yell, and dropped his paddle into the stream. The ball had gone through his hand. Almost instantly, the fugitive upset his canoe, preferring to trust himself to the water rather than to the aim of his enemy.

Seeing this movement on the part of the Indian, Amboy restrained his fire, replaced the weapon in his belt, grasped his paddle again, and headed toward the bank.

The Indian was a fast swimmer, even wounded as he was, and it was not over three minutes before he reached the bank. Amboy strained every nerve and muscle in the chase, but the savage was the first to reach the bank, and drawing himself out of the water, he, to the chagrin of his pursuer, quickly disappeared among the bushes.

Amboy knew that his trying to discover the whereabouts of the Ojibwah, alone and at night time, would much resemble the seeking of a needle in a basket of chaff. He knew, too, that the glen of Kyd was not more than a mile and a half above that point, and if the trappers were there, he could

warn them at once. This could be done through the young half-blood, who, Amboy knew, was in their company.

Producing a small whistle, which Kegonsa had presented to him, Amboy placed it to his lips. Instantly, the signal was answered—answered from a point half a mile distant.

"Ha!" ejaculated Amboy, "they failed, of course, to find the savage, and are returning to the settlement."

He again sounded the signal, in such a manner that Kegonsa would know that immediate assistance was required.

A few minutes later, he heard the noise made as the band made their way rapidly through the bushes, and suddenly a voice said:

"Geehosephat! Thur the varmint goes!"

The voice was that of Bevit. The words were quickly followed by the crack of a rifle.

"Missed him—" An oath finishing the sentence.

Amboy's canoe was lying close to the bank. The young man leaped from it, and, without waiting to draw the craft from the water, ran rapidly forward. In a very short time he arrived within sight of the trappers. Just as he did so, Bevit and Kegonsa jerked into sight, from behind a bush, a struggling savage. It was Waubesa, the Ojibwah.

"At last," said Bevit, "yer caged, so that ye kin never ag'in get loose to raise more deviltries. Quick, comrades; I'm sick o' the sight o' the ugly varmint. Give him his deservies at onc't."

Ten minutes later, and suspended by the neck from the limb of an oak, Waubesa was being choked to death. Finally, when his pulse had ceased to beat, he was cut down.

The tragedy was finished by Kegonsa. The young half blood split the skull of Waubesa in twain.

"This," he said, "in memory of my father."

And where was Kyd? A search in the dreaded ravine, being instituted for the Frenchman's buried treasure, in the ruins of the old hut, revealed another tragedy. There, over the spot where the box had been buried, was discovered the body of Kyd, his skull cloven in twain. The earth had been stirred, and the box evidently had been exhumed, yet had not

THE TRAIL OF DEATH

been returned to its hiding-place. The evidences were that the renegade had been discovered by the branded chief in the act of appropriating the treasure, and had been brained on the spot, and Waubesa had reburied the box in order to regain it at some future day. That box of gold was his doom and Kyd's curse. The two villains had met a deserved fate.

Bevit is still a trapper. He and Kegonsa, soon after the death of Waubesa, struck off into the forest, and set their traps in the streams near the Red River of the North.

A year after the death of her father, Maud and Amboy were united in marriage. Amboy wrote a successful work on scenes and resources of the West, with the proceeds of which he purchased the property owned by Arfort. Both were happy, for their love was truly mutual. And, as Campbell says:

"Oh, love, in such a wilderness as this,
Where transport and security entwine,
Here is the empire of the perfect bliss,
And here thou art a god indeed divine."

THE END

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| The home rulers, how | Told us so to speak, | situation, | The coming man, |
| they "spakes," | Old Mrs. Grimes, | Dar's nuffin new under | The illigant affair as |
| Hezekiah Dawson on | parody, | de sun, | Muldoon's, |
| Mothers-in-law, | Mars and cats, | A Negro religious poem, | That little baby round |
| He didn't sell the farm. | Bill Underwood, pilot, | That violin, | the corner, |
| The true story of Frank, | Old Granley, | Picnic delights, | A genuwine inference, |
| ben's kite, | The pill peddler's ora- | Our candidate's views, | An invitation to the |
| I would I were a boy | tion, | Dundreary's wisdom, | bird of liberty, |
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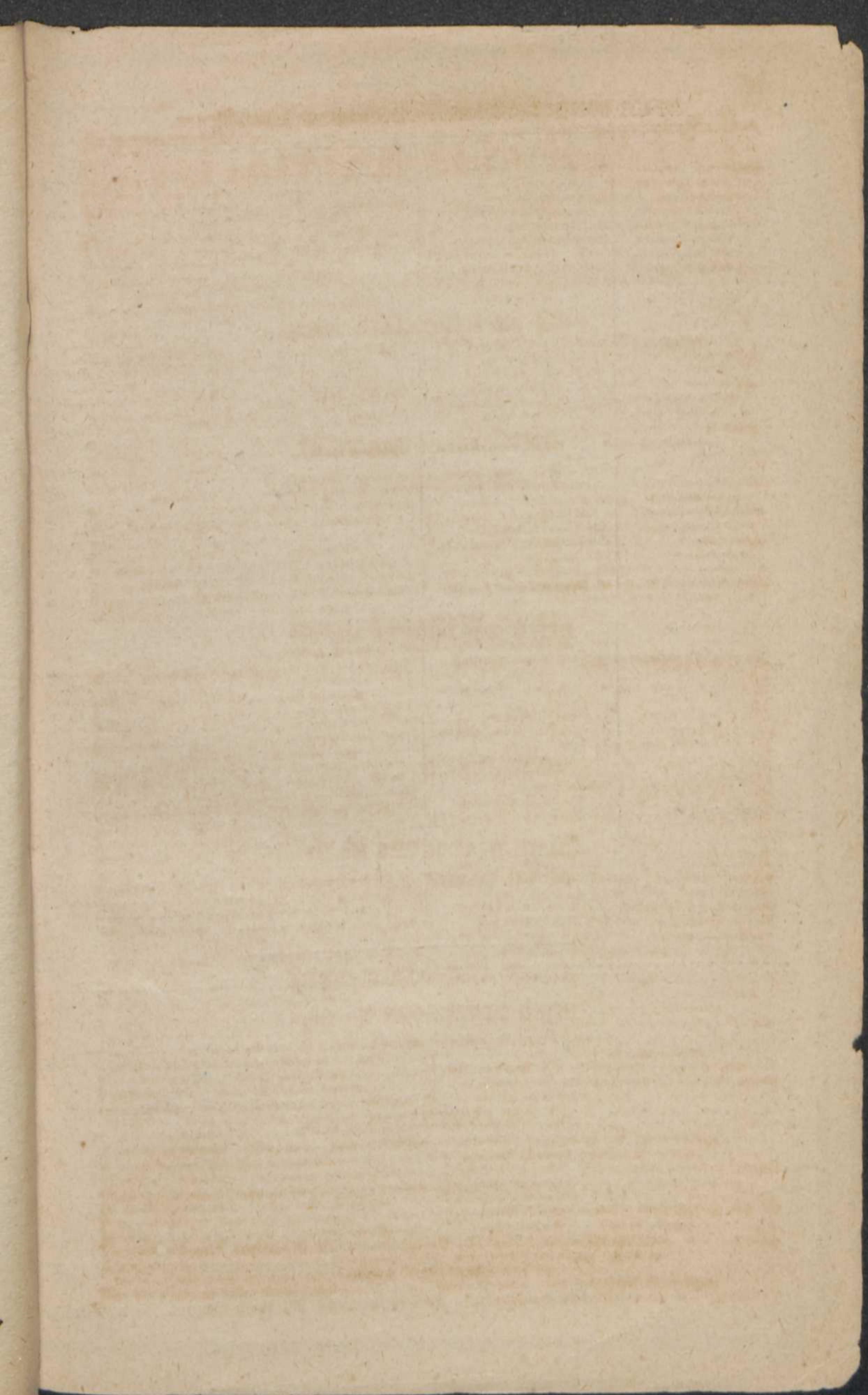
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